THINGS MOST SURELY BELIEVED

J. D. JONES, M.A., B.D.

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BY

J. D. JONES, M.A., B.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE GOSPEL OF GRACE," "THE GLORIOUS COMPANY OF THE APOSTLES," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE

THE sermons in this volume were preached on Sunday evenings in the regular course of my ministry in Richmond Hill. The hope I cherished in preaching them was that they might prove to be aids to the faith of my people in these rather troubled and perplexing times. There has been no attempt to recast them and put them into strict literary form. It is as spoken sermons I beg that they may be judged.

They do not profess to make any fresh contribution to Christian Apologetics. A busy minister has little time for original and independent research. At the best, they do but put in simple and available form the truths I have learned from great Christian teachers like Bishop Westcott, and Dr. R. W. Dale, and Dr. Fairbairn, and Dr. Denney, and many another. My apology for publication must be, that many who heard them delivered wished to possess them in permanent form, and that certain friends, on whose judgment I rely, felt they might be useful to a larger audience than the one which I regularly address.

It is in that hope I send this volume forth. It will be ample repayment for any trouble I may have taken if this volume helps any one to a reasonable and settled faith.

In addition to my indebtedness to the great writers already named and to others to whom I refer in the course of the volume, I desire specially to acknowledge my indebtness to my friends the Rev. R. R. Williams, M.A., of Towyn, and Mr. E. L. Law, of Bournemouth, for many valuable suggestions, and also for their great kindness in revising the proofs.

BOURNEMOUTH.
August, 1908.

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THINGS MOST SURELY BELIEVED

I

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

"For the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity."—ROMANS I. 20.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."—APOSTLES' CREED.

In the preface to his volume of sermons on "Christian Doctrine," Dr. Dale tells an interesting story about himself. Three or four years after he had settled in Carr's Lane he was walking in the streets of Birmingham, when he met another Congregational minister, a Welshman, with all the Welshman's love for imagination and poetry, and, perhaps, a Welshman's dread of hard logic and dry reason. Being a much older man than Dale, the Welshman used to talk to him in quite a frank but friendly way about his preaching. On this particular day, he said to him: "I hear that you are preaching doctrinal sermons to the congregation at Carr's Lane. They will not stand it." To which Dale promptly replied: "They will have to stand it."

Now there may have been, as he himself confesses, " too much of the insolent self-confidence of youth in both the temper and form " of his reply. But, surely, the conception of ministerial duty that underlay it and prompted it was a true one. After all, it is not simply the business of the preacher to entertain and amuse. He has to teach and instruct. He has to see to it that his people are rooted and grounded in the faith. He must help them to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them. It is not milk for babes alone that he has to provide ; he has to provide strong meat for strong men. Dr. Dale followed that plan all through his career, and the result was, he created in Carr's Lane a congregation which, for robust and masculine Christian intelligence, was, perhaps, without a rival throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Now I should like—at however great a distance—to follow in Dr. Dale's footsteps. I should like to expound and enforce the chief articles of the Christian creed. I would fain help you to hold the great verities of the faith with a strong and intelligent grasp. And the present time seems specially opportune for a series of sermons upon our fundamental beliefs. We are passing through a time of religious unsettlement and theological unrest. We have been confronted by the frank and avowed atheism of " God and My Neighbour " ; we have

been bewildered also by the vaguenesses of the "New Theology." My own belief is that no good worth talking about is ever done by criticising the negations and falsities of other systems. I have, therefore, never troubled to refute Blatchfordism on the one hand, or the much criticised New Theology on the other. I have tried to emphasise my own positives. I believe the best way to repudiate the false is to assert the true. Our Lord Himself told us that to sweep the evil spirits out is not enough; the only effectual method of keeping evil spirits out is to put the good spirit in possession. And in exactly the same way the best thing to do for the succour and confirmation of faith in these troubled days is not to attack this system and that which may seem to us to be erroneous and false, but to emphasise and assert the positive truth. Once a man gets hold of the positive truth, false and misleading ideas become innocuous. That, then, is what I want to do; I want to expound positive truth; I want, if I can, to show the reasonableness of the great Christian verities, that we may all be able to contend for the "faith once delivered to the saints."

There is only one other word I need say, by way of introduction, and it is this. I have taken as my guide in these discussions that venerable formula which is known throughout the Christian Church as "the Apostles' Creed." I do not

claim that the creed is really the work of the Apostles. But, substantially, it does set forth the chief points of the faith held by the Christian Church right away from Apostolic times, and around the topics suggested by it our discussions may well gather.

I begin then with the first article in the creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

BELIEF IN GOD

We could not very well, in a discussion of religious belief, begin anywhere else. For the belief in God is the foundation stone of religion. Religion is the response of the human soul to the Divine Being of whose existence it is conscious, and of course without such a belief in a Divine Being there would be no religion at all. Now I invite your attention to this simple, but most significant, fact to begin with. Religion is practically universal. No people or tribe has been yet discovered that is utterly and wholly destitute of religion. As far as the facts carry us, man seems to be naturally and normally a religious being. That is to say man, wherever you find him, has some consciousness of God. His ideas of God may be hopelessly inadequate and unworthy. You have only to think of the fetich-worship of Africa, the idol-worship of some of the islands of the seas, to realise how poor and degraded man's ideas

of God may be. But poor and unworthy though his conceptions of the Divine may be, the fact remains that, speaking broadly, man, wherever you find him, *believes in God*. Atheism is not natural to him. It is artificial and abnormal. And while I do not suggest that this universal belief amounts to a proof, I do suggest this, that one ought not, at the bidding of a sceptical scientist or metaphysician, lightly to flout the universal and abiding instinct of the human heart.

The next thing I want you to notice is that this belief in God is not the result of argument and induction and proof. It is instinctive and intuitive. These peoples do not worship God because His existence has been mathematically demonstrated to them. They believe in God because in various ways they have, shall I say, "felt" Him. They have realised that they stood in the presence of some mighty Power not themselves. And it is so even with the majority of us in Christian England. I suppose most of us can sincerely repeat this tremendous statement and say "I believe in God." And yet our belief, if we begin to analyse it, did not originate with proof. It was not because some one came to us and demonstrated to us the existence of God, in the same way that a mathematical teacher might demonstrate a proposition in Euclid, that we began to believe in Him. We believed in Him long before we thought of

proof. We believe in Him to-day—although, perhaps, to this day we cannot prove. Indeed, let it be frankly stated that you cannot prove the existence of God as you can prove that two and two make four. Intellectually, belief in God is a great venture. It is an act of faith not of sight. Our assurance of God is emotional, moral, spiritual, rather than intellectual. We are so made, Dr. Dale says, that we *must* believe. In all sorts of ways we feel ourselves in contact with some great, mysterious Power. Again and again the veil that hides Him from us becomes so thin that we can feel Him and almost see Him. Again and again His face seems to flash upon us ; His hand seems to be laid upon us. It is not so much matter of proof with us as of experience—the impact of Spirit upon spirit. Just as a man is sure of himself and of the external world, so in the same immediate and intuitive way he is quite sure of God. That is the truth Tennyson emphasises in those stanzas which are familiar to us all :

> If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep
> I heard a voice, " Believe no more "
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep ;
>
> A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answered, " I have felt."

But while our belief in the existence of God is antecedent to proof and independent of proof; and while, indeed, we are compelled to confess that if it depended on strict logical proof, we could never conclusively demonstrate the existence of God at all, our belief is not an irrational thing. There are several lines of evidence that all point towards the Christian belief. Taken together they do not constitute complete logical proof. If they did, there would not be an atheist or sceptic in the world. People may still doubt, if they will; but when the belief in God is already there, they tend to stablish and confirm it. And they do this further service,—they serve to show that our belief in God is not an irrational but a perfectly reasonable faith. They show, as Dr. Orr puts it, that there is no bar in rational thought or in science to that belief. They may not themselves carry us all the way to logical proof, but they bring to the belief we have already formed without proof, abundant verification and confirmation.

Let me indicate to you what some of these lines of evidence are. Most of those who write upon the subject divide these "proofs" into three great classes—the cosmological, the teleological and the ontological. I do not purpose to use these technical terms or to speak in the rather ponderous language of the philosophers. I shall try to put the whole

matter in as plain and simple a way as I know how, and perhaps without using any of these abstruse terms, we may be able to grasp everything that is solid and useful in the arguments they represent.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE IDEA OF CAUSE.

In discussing the external evidences for the existence of God, let me then first call your attention to the argument derived from the *idea of Cause.* It is a law of thought for us that every effect must have a cause, and therefore because there is a world we argue there must have been a Creator. Of course this argument implies that we regard this world of ours as an effect, and that we believe it had a beginning. If it be an effect, if it had a a beginning, then we are driven by the very necessities of thought to demand a great first cause and virtually to adopt the Bible statement and say, " in the beginning God created." The only way in which this argument can be invalidated is by saying that the world, as we know it, never had a beginning, that it is itself an eternal and necessary existence. But many things combine to make this conception impossible. For instance, we can imagine the world non-existent. We cannot imagine time or space non-existent, but we can, without any sense of contradiction, think of the world as non-existent. And quite clearly

that existence cannot be necessary and eternal which the mind can think away. Then a consideration of the nature of the world itself, in the dependency of its parts, and the constant succession of cause and effect, points in the same direction. The world has all the appearance, as one great writer has put it, of a "manufactured article." A manufactured thing implies a manufacturer. A created thing implies a Creator. Our idea of cause compels us to believe in God. Even the Agnostic speaks of the "infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed." This argument from the idea of Cause is really what the Apologists mean by the cosmological argument.

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE ORDER OF THE UNIVERSE

Consider next the argument for the existence of God to be derived, shall I say, from the *rationality of the Universe*. The mere existence of the creation implies a Creator. A consideration of the nature and characteristics of that creation reveals mind and purpose and wisdom in the Creator. It was not through the clash of atoms and the play of blind forces that our world came into being. It is not a chaos; it is a cosmos. It is not an unintelligible world; it is a rational universe. Let me just mention two points to illustrate exactly what I mean.

1. First, we are able to *understand* the universe. Science, for instance, proceeds on the assumption that the world is a world of rational order. And so scientists are busy investigating the forces at work in our world, and they are bringing the universe more and more under the control of intelligible order and law. But the fact that the scientist finds rational order everywhere, implies that a rational mind was in at the making of it. The fact that we can understand the world implies that an intelligence like our own—though infinitely greater—created it. Let me use Dr. Dale's illustration to make the matter quite clear. Suppose you read a poem—let us say Tennyson's "In Memoriam," or any other poem. You do not need any proof that there is a great intellect behind the verses. The words did not come together by haphazard. There is thought and order and purpose in them. You feel their power. You understand and appreciate their appeal. You realise that behind the words there stands an Intelligence essentially like your own, though greater. And the universe is God's "poem." The mere fact that you can understand it, proves that mind made it. The world is not a fortuitous concourse of atoms. It bears everywhere evidence of ordered thought, and you feel as you study it—as Kepler felt when he studied the movements of the planets—that

you are "thinking God's thoughts after Him."

2. And the second point I will mention is this, that there is evident *purpose* in the universe. The old Apologists used to make a great deal of the argument from design—the adaptation of means to ends. Paley, for instance, based almost his whole argument upon it. But the acceptance of the doctrine of evolution is supposed to have invalidated the argument from design. The wonderful adaptation of means to ends, Darwin has taught us, is not the result of Divine creation, but of natural law. "Natural Selection" has taken the place of Divine purpose. But even if Evolution be wholly true, it does not destroy the design argument, it only alters the form of its statement. Evolution itself is evidence of purpose and mind. For the universe is evolving towards something. No one can look out upon the world without being conscious of moral order and purpose. We feel, with Tennyson, that there is some "one far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves," and you must interpret the whole process in the light of the end. Take one aspect of the question. Man, dowered with his unique gift of mind, is confessedly the crown of Creation. All the toil and travail of the milleniums were preparing the way for him. All the upward striving from the primeval slime had man for

its goal and crown. And you must interpret the process in the light of the end. The age-long processes were all with a view to man. There was design and purpose in them. And it is, as Dr. Clarke says, impossible to believe that such a being as man was brought forth as the supreme product in the world, without a mind to conceive it beforehand, and to entertain it as an ideal. The intelligibility and purpose of the universe all point to a creative mind. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Or, as Paul puts it in the text I have quoted: "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and Divinity."

THE ARGUMENT FROM MAN'S MORAL NATURE

The argument which I have just been discussing is what is technically known as the teleological argument. I pass by the ontological argument—the argument which says that the fact that we are able to form our idea of God implies and involves His existence—without mention, partly because it appeals more to the metaphysician than it does to the plain man, and partly because I want to pass on to another argument still more convincing and conclusive. Hitherto we have been considering evidences drawn from the world around us.

Now I invite you to think of the argument to be derived from the *moral nature of man*. After all, the most conclusive proofs of the existence of God are to be found, not without, but within. As the Deuteronomist says, the word,—the final and convincing word—is not in heaven or beyond the sea; it is "very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart." The argument in a nutshell is this. Man is more than a thinking being, he is a moral being. He finds a certain moral law graven on his heart; that moral law implies a law-giver; in other words, man's moral sense points upward to a holy and righteous God. Every man is conscious of the difference between right and wrong. He is conscious of what Kant called the "categorical imperative of duty." He is conscious of living under a more exacting and stringent law than the law of the land, or the customs of society—that moral law which says he ought to do the right, and which condemns him, unsparingly, if he chooses the wrong. Now, whence does this sense of moral obligation arise? Some give it a purely natural origin. Even conscience, they say, is the product of evolution. It is the result of custom and convention and association. But such an account of conscience entirely fails to explain either its scope or its authority. For conscience does not reserve its condemnations simply for offences against the proprieties and conventions of society. We may have broken

no law of society, and yet come under conscience's scourge. Conscience represents a higher law than is observed by any human society, or is written on any human statute book. And the authority conscience exercises is not simply the authority of custom and usage. It is much more immediate and personal. At bottom, when we do wrong, conscience makes us feel that we have to do not with abstract and impersonal law, but with a righteous and holy Person. "Against Thee," is the wrong-doer's cry, "and Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight." The fact is, the "I ought" of conscience points to an eternal moral reason as its ground. The majesty and imperiousness of conscience are only sufficiently explained when we recognise conscience as "the voice of God within" as Theodore Parker put it. The power and authority of every magistrate and judge originate with the king. When they sit on the bench to administer justice, they do so as the representatives of the king, they do so with all the authority of the king. It is that that constitutes their significance; through them the king speaks. And the illustration applies to conscience. Conscience is not some self-constituted tribunal. It is not a case of society sitting in judgment upon you. It is not a case of sitting in judgment upon yourself. Conscience is just the King's Recorder. And to every open and honest mind he is

a witness to that God in Whose holy name he speaks.

There is no need, therefore, to investigate the rocks, or sweep the planets for proofs of God's existence. You carry that proof in your own hearts. God has beset you behind and before, and laid His hand upon you. You cannot escape from His presence—no, not though you ascend into heaven, or make your bed in hell. No! not though you take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. No! not though you should say "Surely the darkness shall hide me." Wherever you go, God will go too. Wherever you go, His hand shall hold you. You cannot escape from God, because you cannot escape from yourself. Your own heart bears upon it, and will always bear upon it, proof and evidence of the existence of a just and holy and righteous God.

THE ARGUMENT FROM SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Here we have then a series of arguments all pointing in the same direction, all tending to show that belief in God is not only a reasonable but almost a necessary faith. I am myself not in the least disposed to minimise the force of these arguments. Their cumulative effect seems to me to be irresistible. And yet I am constrained to admit that by themselves they are not conclusive. Men have doubted, in spite of them. They do not amount to

mathematical proof. Nor need we be surprised at this. As one great thinker has said, a God who could be proved would really be no God at all. Or, if we go so far as to say that they do furnish proof that there is a God, they certainly do not carry us to the Christian conception of God. The Agnostic talks of a force. Others talk of a "stream of tendency"; Matthew Arnold gets as far as a "power not ourselves that makes for righteousness." But it is not a Force, nor a Stream of Tendency, nor a Power that the human soul craves for. It craves for a Person. "My soul is athirst for God, for the living God." And where do we find this living Personal God the soul craves for? Only in one place, in Jesus Christ. In Jesus Christ we get that revelation of God that meets and satisfies the deepest needs of the soul. "I believe in God, *the Father* Almighty," says the old Creed. And though you may find God Almighty in the world without, you do not discover the Father there. And though you may find God Almighty in the moral law within, you do not find the Father there. And it is the Father our souls clamour for. "Shew us the Father," said Philip, and he spoke for humanity, "and it sufficeth us." "It sufficeth us"—we shall have all we want if we know that love is at the very heart of things and that a Father rules. And where shall we see the Father? I repeat, only in Jesus Christ.

"No man cometh to the Father," He said, "but by Me." But "he that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." That was Jesus Christ's mission to the world—to reveal the Father. That was the heart of the good news He brought to the world. "The God in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways, is your Father." But the question at once arises, Is Christ's revelation true? Is God really the loving Father He says He is? How shall we make sure of that? Well, I might urge that the fact that Christ's revelation so exactly meets every want and desire of the human heart is presumptive evidence of its truth. But I pass that by just to say that to prove the truth of Christ's revelation, you must put it to the test of experience. You prove God the Father, in the last resort, only by trying Him. But that is what Christ is continually doing. He creates in men's hearts a faith in God, and then they try Him for themselves, and find all that Jesus said about Him true. They come in their brokenness and defeat and find that like as a Father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. They come in their rags and shame, and they find that "no earthly father loves like Him, no mother half so mild." They come in their grief and sorrow, and they find solace in His Fatherly comfort and care. They come in their poverty and want, and they

find that if earthly parents are willing to give good gifts to their children, much more is their Heavenly Father willing to give good gifts to them that ask Him. These people are quite sure of God. They know Him to be a Father, for they have found Him to be such in actual experience. And their knowledge of God as their Father lends peace, serenity, and triumph to their lives. Their experience, it is true, does not avail for anyone else. But let a man trust Christ's word, his own experience will soon confirm and ratify its truth. He shall find the Father. It seems a venture, but the venture justifies itself:

> Nothing before, nothing behind, the steps of Faith
> Fall on the seeming void and find the Rock beneath.

That is the final and satisfying proof of God—the only possible proof of God the Father—spiritual experience. You must trust Him to get this assurance. You must believe in order to know.

There are, according to Kant, three postulates of the practical reason, three great beliefs that must be assumed to give meaning and moral energy to life. They are these—the belief in God, the belief in freedom, the belief in immortality. And the greatest of these is belief in God. Here it is—the foundation stone of all morality; the basis of all brave living; the secret of strength; the assurance of triumph. I believe

in God—that is the effectual defence against temptation and sin. I believe in God—that is the secret of courage in our warfare against principalities and powers. I believe in God—that is the one ground of hope in dark and distressful days. I believe in God, the Father—that is the secret of peace in days when sorrows press and troubles assail. I believe in God, the Father—that is our triumph and confidence when death draws nigh.

II

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

"God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son."—HEBREWS I. 2.

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."—APOSTLES' CREED.

I ended my sermon upon "the existence of God" by saying that the evidences furnished us by the order and purpose of the universe, and by the moral law within are not sufficient of themselves to bring us the assurance that God is our Father. The "things that are made" *i.e.*, the external world, may, as Paul says, proclaim God's everlasting power and divinity, and the witness of conscience may convince us of God's righteousness and holiness. But neither God's wonders in the world of nature, nor His witness in conscience, reveal to us His love. And it is for that revelation the human heart hungers and craves. That is the only revelation that will really bring the heart satisfaction and peace. "Show us the Father," Philip said—and when he said it, he spoke not simply for himself, but for all mankind—"and it sufficeth us." "It sufficeth us"—that revela-

tion of the Father satisfies. But nature cannot give it. And conscience cannot give it. It is Christ alone who gives it. That is His supreme contribution to our knowledge of God. He shows us "the Father." And no one and nothing else does. "No one cometh unto the Father but by Me."

But now the question inevitably arises, How is it Christ is able to reveal to men the Father? What special qualifications has He for knowing God that we should accept His word as authoritative and final? Why is it we are content to accept His Revelation and believe it on His mere *ipse dixit?* Thousands and millions of people have trusted God through cloud and sunshine, they have believed their times were in a Father's hands, they have gone through life with singing hearts and shining faces because they believed love ruled. And if you begin to inquire into the basis of their belief, it comes back at last to this—they believe God is their Father because Jesus Christ has said so. But why should we believe it just because Jesus Christ has said it? There is only one answer to that question, and that is this. According to the unvarying testimony of the Christian Church, there is between God and Jesus a solitary and unique relationship. He is the "only begotten Son of the Father." He came forth from God. And when He spoke of God, He spoke with all the authority and

certitude of one who shared the Divine nature. In a word the faith of the Christian people throughout the centuries has been that Jesus was not a mere man, but "God manifest in the flesh." Our confidence in Christ's revelation of the Father rests in the last resort on our belief in the fact that He Himself is in an absolutely unique sense God's Son. The Fatherhood of God and the Divine Sonship of Jesus stand or fall together. That is why perhaps in the Apostles' Creed the belief in God the Father is coupled closely with belief in Jesus Christ His only Son. If you will examine this venerable formula you will find that most of the articles of faith are set down as separate and detached beliefs. As for instance, "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints," and so on. But a conjunction couples the first and the second together, "I believe in God the Father Almighty *and* in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord." And they are so coupled because they are mutually dependent. You cannot really have the one without the other. Give up your faith in the Sonship of Jesus and the Divine Fatherhood becomes no better than a guess, a speculation, a perhaps. We only get a solid foundation for our faith as we are able to add to our "I believe in God the Father Almighty" "*and* in Jesus Christ *His only Son* our Lord.'

But the answer that we believe Christ's witness to the Fatherhood of God because we believe Christ was God's only Son at once suggests another question, and that is this. What grounds have we for believing that Jesus did really occupy this unique position in relationship to God? Why is it we believe He was God's Son in an absolutely unshared and solitary sense? It is a stupendous belief, this belief that Jesus was not merely a man, but was "God manifest in the flesh." What grounds have we for accepting it as true? That is the question I want briefly to discuss in the present lecture. Why is it we believe in the Divinity of Christ? Why is it we believe that Jesus was not the Son of Mary simply, but was in very truth the Incarnate Son of God? Now this again, like the question of the existence of God, is a vast and almost limitless topic, and I must perforce leave many aspects of it untouched.

THE EXPECTATION OF AN INCARNATION

If I were writing a treatise on the subject I should begin by saying something about the reasonableness of an Incarnation. At first sight the idea that the infinite God should take flesh, should subject Himself to human limitations, seems almost absolutely incredible, and some have brushed the suggestion aside as not worth consideration or discussion because in the nature of things impossible. But stupendous

and staggering though the suggestion that God should become a man is, I am prepared to assert that second thoughts will show that an Incarnation is not an incredible thing, but is supremely rational and natural. I cannot develop the argument. I can only suggest one or two thoughts for your consideration as I hurry on. This is the first: if there be a Personal God at the heart of things, it is natural that He should reveal Himself. Self-communication, the philosophers tell us, is an essential function of personality. As Dr. Illingworth says: "We cannot conceive a Person freely creating persons, except with a view to hold intercourse with them when created." The second consideration is that the Personal God can only adequately reveal Himself in a person spiritually akin to Himself. Now the objection to the idea of an Incarnation proceeds on the assumption of the vast and infinite distance that separates God and man from one another. But while there is all the difference between God and man that there is between the infinite and the finite, the whole history of mankind as well as the unvarying testimony of the Bible emphasises the fact that God and man are essentially akin. "In the image of God created He him," says the old Book, about the creation of man. There is a kinship between man and God that exists between God and no other of the creatures of His hands. God is Spirit and man is spirit too.

It follows from that fact of essential likeness that it is in man God can most fully express and reveal Himself. He can show His power in the material universe, His wisdom on the field of history; but to show His love—which is His essential nature—God had to reveal Himself in the person of man.

And as a matter of fact wherever we turn we find glimmerings and expectations of the Incarnation. The Christian faith is not the only one that talks of God manifest in the flesh. We find the expectation of Incarnation in pagan religions as well. The Greeks have many a story to tell of the descent of the gods in the likeness of men to dwell for a brief space with mortals. Like the instinct for God Himself, the instinct for, shall I say, a human God is well nigh universal. And what wonder? "If," as Mr. Chesterton puts it, "we are so made that a Son of God must deliver us, is it odd that the Patagonians (and others) should dream of a Son of God?" And all these pagan myths, all these pathetic stories of visitors from heaven, speak of the instinctive cravings of the human heart. They are foregleams and anticipations of what actually came to pass in Jesus Christ. They point forward to Bethlehem. That conviction of the soul that God would come and dwell with man found its full satisfaction in the proclamation of the Christian Gospel, that in the person of

Jesus the Word became flesh and tabernacled amongst us. But I must pass on from these *a priori* considerations. All I want to insist upon is that the idea of an Incarnation is not contrary to reason. It is natural for God to reveal Himself. Man, because of his spiritual kinship to God, is the medium through which that revelation can best be given. And, as a matter of fact and history, instead of regarding the Incarnation as intrinsically absurd and impossible, the human heart hungers for it and expects it.

But if the possibility—even the probability—of Incarnation is admitted, that does not prove that it actually took place in the case of Jesus Christ. Why do we believe that Jesus was none other than the Incarnate God? That is the question I want to discuss with you for a few minutes further. That Jesus lived our human life no one disputes. That He is an authentic historic Person no one denies. Why is it Christian people believe that He was not man simply, but Emmanuel—God with us? Now to a great many people the question is settled by the fact that the Divinity of Christ is assumed in the New Testament from beginning to end.

THE WITNESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

They regard the Bible as the Word of God, and the fact that it preaches the Divinity of

Christ puts for them the entire matter beyond dispute. For let there be no mistake about it, the New Testament does consistently, and from the first page to the last, preach the Divinity of Christ. It is not a question of whether the term "God" is ever directly and pointedly used of Christ. Some people seem to think that if they can only criticise out of existence any and every New Testament passage in which the words "God" or "Godhead" are applied to Jesus, that they have thereby overthrown the doctrine of His Divinity. As a matter of fact they have done nothing of the kind. The Divinity of Christ does not depend upon isolated verses. It is not at the mercy of literary criticism. The Divinity of Christ is axiomatic. It is taken for granted. It is assumed. Faith in it is the atmosphere in which these early Christians lived and wrote. The verses in which something like Deity is attributed to Christ are the least conclusive proof that the Apostles and the early Christians believed in Him as God. "Such texts," as Dr. Dale says, "are but like the sparkling crystals which appear on the sand after the tide has retreated; these are not the strongest, though they may be the most apparent, proofs that the sea is salt; the salt is present in solution in every bucket of salt water. And so the truth of our Lord's Divinity is present in solution in whole pages of the Epistles, from which not a single text

could be quoted that explicitly declares it." Far more convincing evidence than any detached and isolated statements are facts like these, that the New Testament writers put their faith in Christ and give their passionate and whole-hearted love to Him; that without feeling they are doing anything extraordinary, they attribute to Him the prerogatives and attributes usually attributed to God; that they find in Him the springs of their own spiritual life; that they regard Him as the foundation of the Church; that they speak of Him as a present and Almighty power; that they take for granted His pre-existence in glory; that—strict and rigid monotheists as they were—they, without any sense of irreverence, link together the names of God and Jesus in their thoughts and prayers. Isolated verses might possibly be explained away, but woven as it is into the very fabric of the New Testament you cannot explain away the Divinity of Christ without utterly destroying the Book itself. Indeed, over the whole of the New Testament you might write the word which John appends to His Gospel. "These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life in His Name." No scholar disputes that this is so. No critic worth the name denies for one moment that the Apostles and early Christians worshipped Christ as Lord.

It would be useless to deny it. The most casual perusal of this Book would refute them. And if that was not enough, secular history would refute them too. Pliny, who was governor of Bithynia in the early part of the second century, writing to his master the Emperor Trajan about the beliefs and practices of the Christians, mentions this amongst other things, that they were wont to meet together on a certain day before sunrise, "and to sing hymns to Christ as to a god." If there is one indisputable fact in history it is that the earliest Christians believed in the Divinity of Christ, and that that belief is reflected in the pages of the New Testament. And I repeat that for many who regard the Apostles as inspired men and their writings as the veritable word of God, their testimony settles the matter.

But there are those who object that what we get in the Apostles' writings is a Jesus magnified, embellished, idealised. They say that after Jesus, the beloved Teacher, passed away, a process of deification set in, and that what we get in the fourth Gospel and the Epistles especially, is the result of that deification process. And they say that if we want to form just ideas of the Person of our Lord, we must try to get back to the "historic Jesus." Well, personally, I think this disparagement of the Apostolic testimony is foolish and gratuitous. I regard their witness as a mighty testimony

to the Divinity of Jesus. For, in a sense, it was unwilling testimony. These men were Jews, and with the Jew monotheism was a passion. They did not expect a Messiah who was to be Divine. They had been trained to think it an outrage to put any one on an equality with God. And yet the effect produced upon them by the life of Jesus was so overwhelming that, in spite of all their ancestral prejudices, they were constrained to speak of Him and of God together. There was no other way of accounting for Him save by saying He was Divine. All their preconceived notions had to give way to the evidence of the facts. "We beheld His glory," says John, "glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth." But of course an objector may retort—that was the disciple's impression and conclusion; it does not follow that we should come to the same verdict. Very well, let us come face to face with the historic Jesus for ourselves, and see what kind of impression He makes upon us.

THE WITNESS OF JESUS HIMSELF

Now, in reading the Gospels, one thing strikes us at once, and that is this—wherever He went Christ started questions. The attitude of the people towards Jesus in the days of His flesh could be described by an interrogation mark. Everything He said, everything He did, made

them ask these questions: "Is not this the carpenter? Whence hath this man this wisdom? What mean these mighty works wrought by his hands? Who gave thee this authority? Can this be the Christ?" And these questions simply bear witness to the fact that somehow or other Christ was not like other men. There was a difference and everybody felt it. Now when we come face to face with the historic Jesus to-day, we are conscious of the same difference. The mind is in the attitude of an interrogation point. We read biographies of distinguished men. We have read, many of us, the life of Lord Randolph Churchill, and the life of Mr. Gladstone. The story of these gifted men left us admiring, but it did not leave us wondering. Their gifts, conspicuous and shining though they were, were all within the natural compass of human nature. But the story of Jesus leaves us not admiring simply, but wondering. He is a problem, a puzzle, a mystery. His gifts and qualities are not native to human nature. Jesus is not simply great amongst men; He strikes us as being different from them. Let me mention one or two points in which the difference appears most strikingly.

1. First of all, I am struck by *the immense claims He makes for Himself*—claims no mere man would dare to make. If these claims are true, if they can be substantiated, we are driven, willy-nilly, to believe Christ was more

than human. Let me give an illustration or two of these claims. I will not take them from the fourth Gospel, because objections might be raised against its testimony; I will take them from the first three, where we get the living, breathing, historic Jesus. Take this one from St. Matthew: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Here is Jesus announcing Himself as the object of man's search, and the answer to man's desire. He saw a world of weary and laden men and women, and what remedy does He propose for their weariness? Himself. He brushes aside the Mosaic Law with all its machinery of sacrifice and ritual, and proposes Himself as the one and only giver of soul-rest. Or, take such a word as this from St. Luke: "If any man cometh unto Me and hateth not His own father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Notice the staggering nature of the claim involved in such a demand. He declares that "coming to Him," "following Him," is the supreme thing, and for that supreme thing the closest human ties must be ruthlessly severed, and the dearest human relationships unhesitatingly surrendered. Or take such a sentence as this which recurs again and again in the Sermon on the Mount: "Ye have heard it said by them of old time, but I say unto you." "I say,"—and thereby

He set Himself above Moses, and took upon Himself to alter and amend and abrogate that holy law, every letter of which the Jew had been taught to regard as Divinely inspired. Or take the statement with which He began His sermon in Nazareth: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." That is to say, He proclaimed Himself as being the object of prophecy. It was to Him psalmist and seer pointed. It was of Him they spoke. All history led up to Him. All the anticipations of prophecy found their fulfilment in Him. And not to weary you, take that most stupendous claim of all—the claim to be the Judge of men. He asserted that before His judgment seat all mankind would be gathered, and that by his attitude to Him, every man's destiny would be settled. "Ye did it unto Me . . come ye blessed." "Depart, ye cursed. . . ye did it not to Me." Surely the Person Who makes these staggering claims, Who announces Himself as the object of human desire, the one and only good, the end of prophecy, and the Judge of men, presents a problem. What are we to make of Him? If a man were to make claims like these we should write it down as monstrous and blasphemous egotism. Are you to say it was egotism in Christ's case? If so, the perfection of His character goes. But He says Himself He was "meek and lowly in heart," and we feel that His witness in this respect

is true. How is it we are able to believe in the lowliness of Jesus when we hear Him making colossal claims like these? I do not, as a rule, like the argument from a dilemma, but in this case there is no escape from it. If Christ had no right to make these amazing claims, He ceases even to be a good man; He becomes the most arrogant and blasphemous egotist the world has ever seen. But if these claims are true, if He had the right to make them, He is lifted out of the human category at once. The Giver of rest to weary souls, the Lord of human hearts and lives, the Judge of all the world, is not a mere man. He is the equal of God.

2. And the second great point of difference is this. He had absolutely *no sense of personal sin or moral shortcoming*. That is one of the dominant impressions left on the minds of His disciples. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. "Separate from sinners." There are vast and deep differences between men; differences that cut far deeper than mere differences of rank and wealth and social station; I mean differences of intellectual power and moral endowment and spiritual perception. Who can measure the difference between a Lord Kelvin, let us say, and an illiterate peasant? Who can measure the difference, let us say, between a Francis Crossley and one of the hooligans of the slums

amongst whom he dwelt? The difference is immense, immeasurable, incalculable; and yet there is one point where the difference between Lord Kelvin and the illiterate peasant, Frank Crossley and the hooligan, vanishes and disappears. There is one term that is common to all, that describes all, that embraces all, and that is the term "sinner." When it comes to the matter of sin Paul lumps all mankind together, and says, "There is no difference." We are all in the same condemnation. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God, and there is none that doeth good, no, not one! And we all know that what the Bible says in this respect is true. Indeed, the better a man becomes, the more keenly sensitive he is to his own sin. It is not from the notorious sinner that the most poignant confessions of sin come, but from the almost perfected saints. The literature of the saints is the literature of confession. The whole race from highest to lowest groans beneath this consciousness of shortcoming. There is just one great, striking, conspicuous exception, and that is Jesus. There was no one so quick to see sin as Jesus. Why! by His teaching He enlarged men's ideas of what sin was. There was no one who had such power of quickening the sense of sin in others. A word from Him made Zacchaeus repent of His miserliness; the influence He

shed filled the woman who was a sinner with shame for her wicked life ; a look from Him broke Peter's heart. And not only did He quicken the sense of sin in others, but no one in all the world's history felt the ache and shame and pain of sin as Jesus did. Men confined their ideas of sin to the overt act ; Jesus proclaimed the sinfulness of the evil thought. No one ever had such a sense of the ramifications of sin as Jesus had, and yet the remarkable thing is He has no consciousness of any sin or shortcoming of His own. He brings the confession of sin to other people's lips ; He never confesses sin Himself. He teaches His disciples to pray " Forgive us our trespasses," but He never prayed the prayer with them for the simple reason He had no trespasses to be forgiven. Instead of that, He repudiates any idea of personal sin. " Which of you," He says, " convicteth me of sin ? " " The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me," He said, on another occasion. The prince of this world had nothing in Him, not an inch of foothold in His nature. Instead of that He was conscious of a perfect union with God, and a perfect obedience rendered to him : " I do always the things that please Him." And this freedom from sin is no monstrous imagination of Jesus Himself. Read the story of His life ; it is the record of One who never failed, and who, amid thickening plots and snares never made a false step. It

is the record of One who never came short of perfection. His enemies were constrained to admit that He was without fault ; His disciples, after witnessing His life at close quarters, say He did "no sin." Jesus is solitary in the whole human race ; He is the one great Exception. If Jesus was nothing but a man, He was unlike every other man born into the world. There is this immeasurable difference separating Jesus from the rest of the race—they are sinful, He is sinless ; they are stained and corrupt, He is holy and without blemish. Now these two things by no means exhaust the argument for the Divinity of Christ. I shall have to leave the rest for another occasion ; but I invite you to consider these two things. In Jesus you have an absolutely sinless Person. Could the race produce Him ? If it could, why has it not produced another ? Why is Jesus still solitary and unapproached in His holiness ? This sinless Person is an inexplicable problem to me, if I must not go beyond the race to explain Him. But then I remember this same Person made such claims for Himself as only a Divine being can rightly make. The one fact throws light upon the other. His sinlessness ratifies His claims ; His claims explain His sinlessness.

I can understand His sinlessness when I remember that this Jesus is no ordinary man, but claims to be the Rest-bestower, the Law-

giver, the holy Judge of men. If Jesus be all this—if, in a word, He is Divine—I can understand His sinlessness ; and, on the other hand, when I remember He did no sin, though he was born in Bethlehem and toiled in Nazareth, I can believe that He was the Desire of the Nations and the Judge of the World. Take His sinlessness and His claims together, and they point in one direction : Jesus was not merely a man. In Him God took flesh ; in Him God took hold of the seed of Abraham ; in Him God came near to sinful, dying men ; in Him God lived our human life ; God shared our human sorrows ; God faced our human temptations ; God died our human death. God was in Christ ! What a Gospel that is ! For if God was in Christ, what does it mean but that God is a healing God, and a redeeming God, and a saving God, and a loving God ? Yes, that is the revelation we have of God in Christ—a loving God, a God who loves and saves to the uttermost.

You remember the closing lines of Browning's poem, entitled, "An Epistle containing the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician." The poem takes the form of a letter, in which a travelling Arab physician gives to a friend his impressions of the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. The story has profoundly moved him, and especially the testimony Lazarus bore to His benefactor.

This man so cured regards the Curer, then,
As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
Creator and Sustainer of the world
That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!

He puts the suggestion away almost in horror, but he returns to it again and again. There is something in it that meets the need of his soul, and this is how he ends:

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
And thou must love Me, who have died for thee!

The very God! that is so. Then the All-great is the All-loving too, and it is not hard to love and trust that God who bore the Cross for love of us.

III

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

"God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son."—HEBREWS I. 1, 2.

"And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord."—APOSTLES' CREED.

I make no apology for devoting a second sermon to the consideration of the Divinity of Christ. The importance of the theme is my sufficient justification, for it is not too much to say that faith in the Divinity of Christ is the foundation stone upon which the entire fabric of the Christian religion rests. There has been, of late years, a strong movement in the direction of the simplification of our creeds. I have sympathised with it; I think there can be no doubt that in years gone by the unnecessary multiplication of dogmas, which were supposed to be necessary to orthodoxy if not to salvation, placed a sore burden upon faith. We have cast overboard a good many doctrines which our fathers were inclined to count essential, and we were wise to do so; we have suffered nothing thereby. But when it is proposed to deal in the same way with the Divinity of Christ it is time to call a halt. When a man proposes to throw

this overboard, he is not getting rid of superfluous cargo ; he is tearing up the planks of the vessel itself, and is taking a sure method of making shipwreck of the faith. The Divinity of Christ is not something we can believe in or not believe in without making much difference ; it is a vital truth ; perhaps it is not going too far to say *the* vital and central truth of the Christian religion, without which indeed we should have no Christian religion at all. And if you think that is rather an extreme, an exaggerated statement, let me say these two things in justification of it.

1. In saying that *belief in our Lord's Divinity is vital to the Christian religion*, I am only asserting what our Lord, to all intents and purposes, said Himself. Recall to your minds once again the Cæsarea incident. " Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am ? " asked Jesus, of His disciples. Now why did Jesus ask the question at all ? Do you imagine it was mere curiosity that prompted Him to inquire ? To mention this suggestion is to scout it. Why then ? There is only one answer. Because much depended upon the view the people took of Christ's Person. How much we shall find as we follow the story to its finish. " Who do men say that I am ? " Jesus asked ; and they replied, John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. " But who say ye that I am ? " asked Jesus, making the inquiry not general but personal ; and Simon Peter replied,

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now that may not be a confession of full deity, in the sense that you and I understand it, but at any rate it recognises that Christ was not a mere man, but held an absolutely unique relationship to God. And it provoked from Christ this remark: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Now notice that last great assertion! "Upon this rock will I build my church!" I am not going into a long discussion of this much-controverted passage! The rock, according to most Protestant theologians, means Peter's confession; according to the Roman Catholic exegetes it is Peter himself. But really the difference between the two interpretations is not so great as it at first sight appears; for even if the "rock" is Peter, it is the Peter who made this great confession. With people who did not get beyond thinking of Jesus as Isaiah or Jeremiah or Elijah or John the Baptist, that is, with people who only thought of Him as a great man, Christ could not make His Church; there was no foundation upon which to build. But with men like Peter, ready to confess He was Divine, He could build a Church against which the gates of hell could not prevail. The confession

of His Divinity made the difference. So it comes to this, that according to Jesus Himself, faith in His Divinity is a foundation truth without which the Christian Church cannot exist at all.

2. And the second fact I will mention in justification of my classification of faith in the Divinity of Christ as one of the central and vital truths of the Christian religion is this. That as a matter of fact *it is in the strength of this truth the Church has lived and conquered.* This is how Dr. Illingworth expresses it. "Faith in the Incarnation, with all that it involved, has been the sole and exclusive source of our historic Christianity." It was in this faith the Apostles preached; it was in this faith missionaries and evangelists laboured; it was in this faith that martyrs suffered and died. It is in this faith that the saintliest lives are lived and the noblest deeds are done at this very day. Christ's word is verified by history. This faith has been the foundation of the Church. Without it the historic Christianity we have known would never have existed. And if you say, at this day, that the belief is a mistake, you are committing yourself to the assertion that the most glorious institution the world has ever seen—the Christian Church—and the most heroic and sacrificial lives the world has ever witnessed—the lives of the Christian people—are all of them the product of a delusion and a mistake. So let us be under no misapprehension about

this matter. Gibbon's sneer about the Arian controversy is familiar to all. That controversy raged about the Person of Christ. Was Christ Himself eternally Divine or was He merely the first of created beings? that was the question. Gibbon sneered at the whole controversy, and remarked that Christendom was rent asunder about a diphthong. But Carlyle saw the monumental fatuity of the sneer. The diphthong made all the difference between Creator and creature. Carlyle saw it was not a trumpery and paltry quarrel about something that did not matter a straw either way. The entire Christian faith was at stake. And so it is still. People are apt even in these days to dismiss discussions on a theme like this as being superfluous and needless. They affect a certain breadth of mind and ask us, what does it matter after all? Well, to me, it matters everything. It is central to my Christian faith. It is vital to the historic Christianity we know. I do not say that if you abandoned belief in the Divinity of Christ, you might not still retain the influence of the Christian ethic. You might! But Christianity, as we know it, would perish. For what Coleridge said upon this point is completely and entirely true, that while a Unitarian may be a Christian, Unitarianism is not Christianity. It is just because I believe it to be such a central, vital truth, that I want to mention a few other considerations which may help us to hold it as a reasoned and intelligent conviction.

RECAPITULATION

Let me in a sentence or two remind you of the points already dwelt upon in the previous sermon. I began by saying that it was inevitable that a personal God should reveal Himself, and that a full revelation could only be given through a person. An incarnation is therefore not only not irrational and impossible, but is supremely reasonable and to be expected. In answer to the question, why we believe such an Incarnation took place in the person of Jesus Christ, I referred first to the unanimous witness of the New Testament. Belief in our Lord's Divinity pervades the book from end to end. Then, setting aside the Apostolic testimony, I tried to come face to face with Jesus Christ Himself. I referred specially to two characteristics of our Lord. (1) His amazing and staggering claims. The meek and lowly Jesus again and again laid claim to prerogatives that are no less than Divine. These claims shut us up to one of two conclusions—either Jesus was not even a good man, or else he was the Divine Person He claimed to be. (2) And the second point I referred to was His sinlessness. By that mere fact Christ is lifted out of the ordinary human categories and is set in a place absolutely by Himself. He is the great exception. The entire race is shut up under sin. He, and He only, is holy, harmless, undefiled. Starting from the humanitarian premiss His sinlessness is a problem

and a puzzle; it becomes intelligible only as we believe that Jesus is the Word made flesh.

Now I have by no means exhausted the evidence from Christ's own life and character. I should like, for instance, to have spoken about Christ's *direct assertions of His unique relationship to God.* It is of no use to say that we are all of us "potential Christs," that our relationship to God and His are essentially the same, the only difference being one of degree. When I read His own words it is the solitariness of His Sonship I find Him insisting upon. "All things have been delivered unto Me of my Father," I hear Him say, "and no one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." He knew Himself to have a relationship with God that was His and His only. "No one knoweth the Father but the Son." It is flying in the face of Christ's own witness to say that our relationship and His are essentially the same. It is surely a significant fact that while Christ often speaks of God as *the* Father, *My* Father, *your* Father, He never associates Himself with His disciples to call Him *our* Father. On the contrary He draws a sharp distinction; He deliberately separates Himself from His disciples when it comes to His relationship to God. "*My* Father, *your* Father," He says, "*My* God, *your* God."

Then in any complete account of the evidence from Christ's character and life I ought to have something to say about *His Miracles.* They had a great deal to do with creating faith in Him as Divine among His first disciples. But I pass them by without mention for two or three reasons: (1) Because by many people their evidence is discredited, and in any case their evidence is overshadowed by the evidence of the sinless life; and (2) because all the other miracles seem to me to stand or fall with the miracle of the Resurrection. That is the crucial miracle. Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by the Resurrection from the dead. But that cardinal and critical event, as it receives separate mention in the creed, deserves and must have a sermon all to itself. So for the moment I leave the miracles and any further study of the historic life of Jesus, to bring before you another set of considerations equally cogent in their way as those I have already mentioned.

THE EVIDENCE FROM EXPERIENCE

The particular evidence to which I wish to call attention now is the evidence to be derived from *the experience of believers.* Let me begin by asking you to notice this fact that belief in the Divinity of Christ is never the result of a critical study of the history merely; it is always the result of the personal impression

which Christ, through that history, makes upon the mind and heart. As Professor Martin puts it, the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ is formulated not simply by the facts about Christ, but also by the experience of believers. That was so with the first disciples. It was not after a close study of the facts that they arrived at their faith in Christ as Divine. The doctrine was not the product of logic. It was not the result of reasoning and argument. The doctrine was simply the expression of what they felt. Christ did for them, and to them, and in them, what only God could do, and as a result of their own experience they came to believe He was Divine. And Christ is continually creating faith in His Divinity in the same way still. Indeed, it is safe to say that faith in Christ's Divinity never does become a vital truth to any one until it is proved in personal experience. To be sure He is Divine, we ourselves must experience His Divine power. Now let me, if I can, very briefly and simply indicate how Christ demonstrates Himself as Divine in experience.

A LIVING PERSON

I do not, of course, mean to suggest that all men's experience is precisely the same. But allowing for infinite difference of operation, Christ is constantly doing these things for men. First, He reveals Himself as a *living Presence.* We are not surprised, perhaps, to find what a

vast influence Christ exerted upon His disciples, while He was yet present with them. The remarkable thing is that, after He had passed from earthly sight, that influence did not diminish; it increased. Christ did not expect it to diminish. Almost His last words to His disciples before He passed into heaven were these: "Lo, I am with you alway even to the end of the world." Now to realise the significance of these words in Christ's case, imagine, as Mr. Carnegie Simpson suggests, that they were the last words of some dear friend or trusted teacher. "How infinitely sad, and pathetic they would be! Why? Simply because they were not and could not be really, fully, literally true. Something will, perhaps, remain—a dear memory, a great example, but not the loved presence; not the potent personal example!" I read in the cemetery yonder on more than one grave a sentence to this effect: "To live in loving hearts is not to die," and I am always struck by the pathos of it, the futility of it. For, say what you like, however beloved they may have been, the dead do not live in our hearts as they did when they were personally with us! Absence weakens their power, and destroys their inspiration! I suppose the greatest political force of the last century was Mr. Gladstone. To realise how he could thrill men and rouse men and inspire men, we have only to recollect his

tremendous campaign against the Bulgarian atrocities. Well, people often quote Mr. Gladstone, and appeal to Mr. Gladstone's example still; but no one will say Mr. Gladstone is the force and power he was when he was personally present, and could move and subdue men by the power and passion of his speech! He is only a great memory, not an inspiring presence. But notice how different the case is with Christ. He said: "I am with you alway," and his followers have found it literally true. Read the Epistles—they are full of the kindling and triumphant sense of the presence of Jesus. It is not a dead leader they speak of—but a living Lord. The Apostles ventured upon all sorts of difficult tasks, flung themselves into seemingly impossible enterprises, dared the principalities and powers of the earth, all because they believed that Christ was with them. And not only believed, but had Him really with them. "I live," cries one of them "yet not I but Christ liveth in me." "Nevertheless," the same Apostle writes about a time when he was in sore peril and danger, "the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." I need not multiply instances. Christ was to these first disciples, not a posthumous influence, but a personal Presence. And as it was with the first disciples, so it has been with Christian people of every age. Christ promised to be with us, and He *is*

with us; and it is of no use saying that this is simply the influence of His ideas and example. We feel we are in contact with a living Spirit. He does for us to-day what He did for His disciples long ago when He dwelt with them in bodily presence. He accomplishes His mighty works upon us and in us to-day. He Himself, the living Person, is with us.

FORGIVENESS

Now, I want to go on to mention two effects this living and personal Christ has upon us. This is the first, He deals with our sins and removes them. I said in my last sermon that though He had no consciousness of sin of His own, He could and did quicken the sense of sin in others. In fact, people who had been full of self-righteousness before, were smitten with an overwhelming sense of shortcoming and shame in the presence of Christ, like Peter, who cried: "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But Christ did more than create the sense of sin; he was able also to remove the burden of sin. In other words He exercised *the power of forgiveness*. He claimed the right when He was here on earth. "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee," He said to the sick of the palsy; and when the scribes who stood by charged Him with blasphemy, because He took to Himself a power which belonged alone to God, Jesus healed the palsied man to convince His critics

that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins. And He has been exercising that power all down the centuries. He forgave Zacchæus's sin; He forgave the harlot's sin; He forgave the dying robber's sin. And the forgiveness was not verbal, it was real. These men were, in very truth, released from their sins and had their hearts filled with the peace of God. And, as John Bunyan puts it, millions have, like Christian, gone to the foot of the Cross, and at the Cross the burden of their sins has been loosed from their backs, and has rolled from their shoulders, and has fallen into the sepulchre, and they have never seen it more. I am not, at this moment, concerned to discuss the *rationale* of forgiveness. I am only here and now concerned with the fact. And here is the stupendous fact confronting us. Jesus at this very day exercises the power of forgiving sins, and at His word men and women, guilty and fallen, stand up rejoicing in the conscious possession of the peace of God.

EMPOWERMENT

But that is not all. Christ not only forgives men's sins, but He *becomes to them their moral empowerment*; He sets before men an ideal of holiness and enables them to realise it. You would say the life of generosity was impossible to a miser; the life of purity impossible to a harlot; the life of honest diligence impossible

to a runaway thief; but Christ imparts new and undreamed-of powers to men, He begets the Divine life within them. If any man is in Christ; he is a new creature. Like Paul himself, he can do all things "through Christ who strengtheneth him." The late Henry Drummond begins his booklet, "The Changed Life," by quoting those familiar words of Professor Huxley: "I protest that if some great power would agree to make me always think what is true and do what is right on condition of being turned into a sort of clock, and wound up every morning, I should instantly close with the offer." Whereupon Drummond remarks, "I propose to make that offer now; in all seriousness—without being 'turned into a sort of clock,' the end can be attained." And then he proceeds to talk about the moral empowering of Christ. It is a bold claim, but is it a true one? Yes, it is a true one. Jesus Christ does enable men to think what is true and do what is right. He opens up within them new sources of power, new springs of life; He refashions and recreates them. There is scarcely need to quote examples—history teems with them. We have them about us on every hand. When I was down in South Wales just before Christmas, I made it my business to make inquiries about the results of the great Revival of three or four years ago. Of course, there had been a measure of reaction. Alas! there always is after any time of great spiritual excitement.

But the gains were clear and enormous. "You cannot go into any church in this valley," a colliery owner said to me, "but you will find in it men who, three years ago, were amongst the drunkards and reprobates of the district." Drunkards and reprobates three years ago; sober and praying men to-day! The seemingly helpless slaves of evil habits three years ago; conquerors over passion and sin to-day! And what accounts for the change? This is what they themselves would say: Jesus Christ accounts for the change. He has strengthened them with might, by His Spirit, in the inward man. He has brought them off more than conquerors. They put their freedom, their emancipation, their new and victorious life all down to the power of the Lord. Now here, then, is the problem; here is a Person whose living Presence men feel, and who does these two stupendous things for them. He forgives their sins and lifts them on to a new plane of living; He delivers them from guilt and empowers them for holiness; He frees them from shame and quickens the Divine life within them. Now what I want to know is, who is this Person? No other man in the world's history has been able to do these things for his fellows! No one ever heard of Plato or Dante or Shakespeare bringing men the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins! No one ever heard of men lifted up by the personal presence of Socrates or

Epictetus into newness of life! Since the world began no one ever heard of men saved, regenerated, redeemed by this and that great teacher. But there is a multitude that no man can number ready to attest that Christ has done this stupendous thing for them. "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" asked the scribe. I ask the same question. And who can impart the eternal life save God only? A stream cannot rise higher than its source; the effect cannot be greater than its cause. I see the Divine life quickened in innumerable souls by the influence of Jesus. There is but one conclusion for me—Jesus must be Himself Divine. That is how belief in Christ's Divinity is being constantly created. Men are not argued into it; they believe Jesus to be God, because they find Him doing God's work in them.

Here, then, is Jesus claiming for Himself a relationship to God such as no other man enjoyed, and doing in men and for men such works as only God can do. What shall we say of Him? I know that to say He was God is a stupendous and staggering thing, but what else can we say? To say He was only a man is to fly in the face of every fact of history and experience. You say it is hard to believe. I grant it; but it is harder still to disbelieve. I see Him living His sinless life, I see Him working His divine deeds, and I am shut up to this—"the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us."

And this stupendous faith meets the desires and aspirations of the human heart. You remember what Browning, in his great poem, "Saul", makes David say:—

"'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. Oh, Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by for ever; a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gate of new life to thee; see the Christ stand!"

I have only two words to add. This is the first. After all, if the Divinity of Christ is to be anything beyond a barren dogma, if it is ever to become a real and vital faith, we must try Him for ourselves; we must put ourselves in His hands; we must obey Him; we must follow Him; we must trust Him; and when we find that Jesus brings to us the forgiveness of our sins, and releases us from the power of evil, and empowers us for holiness and creates within us the eternal life; when we find, in a word, that He does for us what only God can do, we shall need no proof of His Divinity; we shall know it. There will be no difference for us then between God and Christ, and we shall feel, as Hermann, the great German theologian, puts it, that in calling Christ God we are simply giving Him His right name.

And the second word is this. If Jesus Christ be God, what practical attitude are we going to take up towards Him? "I believe," says the article in the Creed, "in Jesus Christ His only Son, *our Lord*." Our Lord! that is it! If Jesus be God, He ought to be our Lord, our Master, our King, and we ought to be His servants. But is He our Lord? Is He the Master of our lives? Are we His servants? Do we, day by day, obey Him? "My Lord and my God," said Thomas. That is the full Christian confession. There are some who say "my Lord" and not "my God"; there is hope for such, for those who obey Christ are sure to follow on to know Him. They, who do the will, shall know of the teaching, and, in any case, our Lord has told us it is not the lip-orthodox, but those who "do the will" who shall enter the kingdom of heaven. There is poor hope, however, for those who say "my God," but who do not obey Him as Lord. That is to have the form of godliness without the power thereof; that is to offer sacrifice instead of obedience. It is to such Christ says "I never knew you." What attitude do we take towards Christ? Do we obey Him and serve Him? We say "my God"; shall we not go on to add:

"My gracious Lord, I own Thy right
To every service I can pay;
And call it my supreme delight
To hear Thy dictates and obey."

IV

THE TRUE HUMANITY OF JESUS

"It became Him . . . to make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering."—

HEBREWS II. 10.

"Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried."—APOSTLES' CREED.

In the two preceding sermons I have been trying to expound and enforce those considerations which have constrained Christian people all down the centuries to feel that Christ was no mere man, but God manifest in the flesh. I have taken for granted our Lord's true humanity. No one feels any difficulty on that score nowadays. That there was such a historic Person as Jesus is as sure as that there was such a person as Julius Cæsar, or Oliver Cromwell or Napoleon; that the historic Jesus was a real man no one dreams of disputing, much less denying. Our difficulty comes in understanding how, being a man, He could be more than a man at the same time. It is not the real humanity, but the true Divinity of our Lord we stumble at. But it was the opposite difficulty that the early Christians felt most acutely.

They knew Jesus was God; they had beheld His glory; the impression His Personality produced upon them left them in no doubt on that point; they had experienced His Divine power; they had received from Him the eternal life, and that settled the matter for them. Their difficulty was to understand how, being God, Jesus could at the same time be a real man. We take for granted Christ's humanity and stumble at His Divinity. They beheld and felt His Divinity, and rather stumbled at His humanity. And so we find in the early Church many theories and speculations about Christ's Person, the tendency of which was to exalt His Divinity at the expense of His humanity; theories which made Christ a God, but denied that He was a brother. To the Gnostic leaders, for instance, it seemed absolutely incredible that God should take flesh and dwell in a body like our own; they held that matter was essentially evil, and therefore, to them, to say that God could become incarnate was like saying that light and darkness could dwell together; and so we get their theory that the body of Christ was a mere phantom body into which the Divine element entered at baptism, and that it was this phantom body, from which the Divine element had already fled, that was nailed to the Tree. And Gnosticism or Docetism, to give it its specific name, was not the only heresy that denied the true humanity of Jesus.

Perhaps none did it so crudely and baldly, but other theories which gained considerable acceptance in the Church did so as really and effectively, if not quite so obviously. For instance, Apollinaris, the bishop of Laodicea, in the fourth century—an extremely acute and able man,—accepting the familiar tri-partite division of man into body, soul and spirit, maintained that Jesus had a real human body and a real human soul, but he denied that Jesus had a human spirit. The place of the human spirit in Jesus was taken, he maintained, by the Eternal Word. Later still, the theory of Eutyches made its appearance, which again denied the true humanity of Christ, by saying that what we have in Him is a nature which is neither human nor Divine, but a sort of amalgam of both. I mention these ancient speculations, not because I delight to rummage amongst the musty records of the past, but just to make it clear that in the early days men felt as great difficulty about the real humanity of Jesus as we do in these days about His Divinity. The New Testament is, of course, as emphatic about the one truth as it is about the other. There are two sets of facts in connection with the earthly life of Jesus. The Bible puts both sets of facts down side by side; it tells us, here was a Man who lived a veritable human life; here was a Man who, at the same time, was very God. The two sets of facts seem irreconcilable, mutually

exclusive. Without attempting to reconcile or explain, the New Testament writers speak what they do know, and testify what they have seen; they state the facts, and the facts are that Jesus was man and God at the same time; unmistakably man, for He shared in all the ordinary human experiences; undeniably God, for He had imparted the Divine life to them. Listen to the way in which John, for instance, sets the two facts side by side in the very first chapter of the Gospel. He starts with the Divinity: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is a solemn, authoritative assertion of the Deity of Christ. Then a few verses lower down he goes on to say: "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us." "The Word became flesh." God became man. The humanity of Jesus was as real as His Divinity; the denial of the true humanity of Jesus was as fatal to the Christian Gospel as the denial of His full Divinity. The Apostle John is specially emphatic upon this point. Listen to these stern and almost menacing words in His first Epistle. "Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit which confesseth not Jesus"—*Jesus*, notice, the real man—"is not of God, and this is the spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it cometh, and now it is in the world already." And that venerable

formula, the Apostles' Creed, which we are taking for our guide in these discussions, is as emphatic as the New Testament itself in insisting upon our Lord's real Divinity and genuine humanity. It starts with the confession of His Divinity. "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord." And then it proceeds with equal clearness and emphasis, to insist upon His real humanity. "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." Now look at the verbs contained in this brief sentence—conceived, born, suffered, died, buried—they are verbs that set forth the great and universal human experiences. They breathe of mortality. We might sum up every human life in these terms—conceived, born, suffered, died, buried. They stand for experiences through which every one must pass. The distilled essence of humanity, so to speak, is in these statements. This *is* human life—to be born, to suffer, to die, to be buried. And Jesus was a true man. He passed through all these experiences Himself. He was "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried."

LIFE OF JESUS AS MAN

Now I do not suppose there is any need for me to spend much time in demonstrating the

truth of this assertion of the creed. If there is one fact written large across the story of the Gospels, it is the fact that Jesus was a man. How completely and really a man perhaps we ourselves are slow to recognise, and reluctant to admit, because we have a mistaken notion that to admit Christ's real humanity, is somehow or other to imperil His Divinity. But let us glance quickly over the Gospel records, to see exactly what the statement that Christ was a real man means.

1. In the first place, it is quite evident that Jesus had a real human body. It came into the world by the natural channel of birth. It grew as other bodies do. It gave to all who beheld it the impression of substance and reality. It could be seen and handled and felt. It was sustained and nourished by food exactly as our bodies are. It experienced exactly the same sensations as these bodies of ours do still. For instance, we are told that one morning having forgotten to eat bread, Jesus as He journeyed to Jerusalem felt hungry. We are told that on another occasion, after a tiring journey in the heat, He was wearied. On yet another occasion, we are told, He was so worn out with the exertions of the day that, though He had only the hard floor of the boat on which to lie, and though the storm hurtled all around Him, He slept. As He hung upon the Cross, He suffered exactly the same agonies that any other victim of that

awful punishment would suffer, and gave expression to His pain in the cry: "I thirst." And He not only experienced the same physical sensations that we do while He was alive, but His body met with the fate our bodies suffer still. He died. He really died. The breath left His body, and it was a cold, helpless, inanimate burden that the mourners laid in Joseph's rocky grave.

2. But Jesus had more than a human body; He had also a human mind. This is, perhaps, the fact we find it hardest to realise. Most of us, in our thoughts of Jesus, are inclined to attribute to Him the Divine mind. I am not forgetting the unique powers of vision and insight our Lord possessed, and yet I am persuaded that no one can read the Gospels carefully and candidly without seeing that when Jesus took flesh He did more than submit to the physical limitations of humanity: He submitted to its intellectual and mental limitations as well. Omnipresence was not the only attribute that our Lord laid aside when He "emptied Himself"; He laid aside omniscience also. Our Lord did not know everything from earliest childhood. To suppose any such thing as that is to artificialise and indeed to dehumanise His whole life. On the other hand, Jesus's childhood was a normal childhood; He learned things as we learn them; His intellectual horizon expanded exactly as ours does

still ; " He advanced in wisdom " ; " He grew and waxed strong, *becoming full* of wisdom." And even in manhood we can see evidences of the limitations of our Lord's knowledge. When He asked the disciples : " How many loaves have ye ? " He asked the question simply because He did not know. When He came up to the barren fig tree and found no fruit on it, He was genuinely disappointed ; He did not know that it was a case of all leafage and no fruitage. When He asked the mourners at Bethany : " Where have ye laid him ? " He asked for the simple reason that He did not know the exact spot where Lazarus was buried. But there is no need to labour the point, for Jesus Himself distinctly asserts the limitations of His knowledge. " Of that day and hour," He said, speaking of the coming judgment, " knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son but the Father only." Our Lord, when He emptied Himself, laid by His omniscience as well as His omnipresence, and submitted Himself to the mental as well as the physical limitations of mankind ; He had a human mind in His human body.

3. Then it is evident He had all the human sensibilities and affections. There was nothing phantasmal about His humanity ; He had all the feelings that are natural to a real human ; He was surprised. He marvelled. He was grieved and troubled. He was indignant and

angry. He felt shame. And above everything else, He loved. Innocence appealed to Him, so that He took the children in His arms and blessed them. Frankness and honesty won His heart, so that when He beheld the young ruler He loved him. Jesus was no mere form and semblance of a man, a kind of statue of a man, flawless and perfect as a statue, and just as cold. He was a real man with a throbbing, pulsing human heart, and all the sensibilities and affections that are characteristic of human nature.

4. And finally He had the real human soul. In the spiritual life He was still the real man. I am not forgetting the closeness, the intimacy of His communion; but side by side with that fact you must set two others which make us realise how real and true His humanity was. This is the first: Jesus had to face and fight His temptations as you and I have. It was no sham fight He waged in the wilderness, it was a grim and terrible conflict. It was not a piece of play-acting we see in the Garden. The Lord was in an agony, and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. Our Lord's temptations were not make-believe, they were real, tense, fierce struggles. He "suffered" being tempted.

And this is the second: He sustained His spiritual strength by prayer exactly as we have to do; He felt Himself dependent upon

His Father just as we are. Again and again we read of how He went up to the mountain to pray. He prayed for others, and He prayed for Himself. In the great crises of His life He sought strength and guidance from God. On the night in which He was betrayed, He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. Our Lord's spiritual life was human; He was dependent as we are upon the grace and succour of God.

There is no need to elaborate the truth further. Body, mind, feeling, spirit—our Lord was a real man. He is no demi-God; He is very God and at the same time very man; He shirked none of the experiences incident to our mortal life; He was made in all things like unto His brethren!

I should have liked, at this point, to break off my exposition in order to preach the Gospel implicit in the truth of our Lord's humanity; for there is a Gospel in His humanity, just as truly as there is in His Divinity. For if the Divinity of Christ assures us of the love and grace of God, surely the real humanity of Jesus reveals to us the glorious destiny possible for us. Jesus is the ideal man, the pattern and representative man; His life is our model, He has left us an example that we might follow His steps. He illustrates the splendid potencies of human nature. That is the glorious end to which some day we shall attain—" unto a full

grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

But I forbear to launch out upon that most tempting and inspiring theme for the simple reason that I want to turn my attention to that one point in connection with our Lord's humanity which the Creed specially emphasises, and that is His suffering. Look at the sentence again. Between the clause which says He was " born of the Virgin Mary," and the clause which says " He was crucified, dead and buried," the Creed inserts just one simple statement. Here it is : " He suffered under Pontius Pilate." Jesus uttered the most wonderful words, He did the most marvellous deeds, He helped and succoured and healed a multitude of folk ; but the Creed passes all this by in absolute silence, and the only item it inserts between our Lord's birth and death is this—" He suffered." At first, perhaps, this strikes us as strange. Why does not the Creed say " He preached the Gospel, He healed the sick, He raised the dead " ? Those statements would have been all of them true. Why, then, does it confine itself to this one statement—He suffered ? I say it strikes one as strange at first sight. But, on second thoughts, the mention of this solitary fact about our Lord appears meaningful and significant. That was the great achievement of our Lord's life—He suffered ! That was

the purpose for which He came into the world. Jesus was more than Prophet, Teacher, Miracle-worker; He was, above everything else, the Sufferer. He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Had He not suffered, His teaching and His wonderful works would have profited the world but little; His suffering was His great achievement. His work consummated itself and summed itself up in His suffering. That is why, surely, even the Gospels themselves, out of their scanty pages, devote such a large space to the account of our Lord's passion. They realise that the central significance of Christ's life is to be found not so much in what He taught as in what He suffered; not so much in the Sermon on the Mount as in the Cross. The old Creed is in strictest accord with the New Testament, and is, indeed, at the very heart and core of the Gospel when it mentions this as our Lord's supreme and central achievement—" He suffered! "

SUFFERING AND SYMPATHY

Now can we understand why it is that such immense stress and emphasis are laid upon the fact that our Lord suffered? Can we understand why it is that out of all the facts of His earthly career the fact of His sufferings is picked out as being the one of vital importance? I think we can. In the first place, *Jesus could not have been a true Helper and Friend* to men

if He had not suffered. That was surely one of the objects of His coming to earth and taking flesh, that He might become our Friend and Brother. But a Jesus who had never suffered would be clean outside the experience of the rest of the race ; He would have been unable to be a Friend and a Brother just when we need a Friend and Brother the most ; for it is not in our days of prosperity we need sympathy and love, so much as in our days of sorrow and trouble. And when sorrow and trouble come, it is only those who have known the touch of sorrow and trouble themselves who can really sympathise. And sorrow and trouble come to all ! We are born to trouble, says the old Book, as the sparks fly upward. There is no need to take unduly pessimistic views of life, and speak as if it were nothing but suffering and pain ; but, nevertheless, suffering is inseparable from it. I do not know what may occur between life and death in the case of any one of us, I can write no detailed history, but this I know, somewhere in between life and death, we are all doomed to suffer ! And a Christ who had never suffered would have been but a poor friend for a race of troubled, suffering men. His friendship would have failed us just when we needed it most ! But " He suffered " says the old Creed. And the history bears the assertion out. No one, indeed, ever suffered like Him ! He suffered all the pains and pangs to which

our humanity is liable. He suffered physical weariness and distress. He suffered disappointments,—Nazareth would not receive Him. His brethren did not believe on Him. He was wounded in the house of His friends,—Judas betrayed Him with a kiss, and Peter cursed and swore he never knew Him. He suffered the pains of bereavement and loss,—He saw one of His best friends laid in the grave; "Jesus wept." He suffered the pain of temptation,—He knew what it was to fight against the seduction of the world. He knew the bitter pains of death itself. "He suffered"! And what is the result? He is able, says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "to be a faithful and merciful High Priest"; He is able to sympathise with us when we are in the midst of pain and suffering to-day! The gracious Lord has been made perfect through His sufferings. He was made a perfect man through His sufferings; He was made a perfect sympathiser too. We can go to Jesus in our griefs and sorrows with the assurance of succour and help. He knows! He has been through them all Himself; He is one of us; He suffered!

"In His feet and hands are wound-prints,
And His side."

SUFFERING AND REDEMPTION

In the second place, *Jesus could never have been the Redeemer of men* if He had not suffered. This is the real reason why the

emphasis is laid, both in the New Testament and in the Creed, upon the suffering of Jesus. The suffering was a condition of redemption. And Christianity, remember, is not a philosophical theory, it is not a speculative system, it is a Gospel of Redemption. Jesus is not, as some would have us believe, a mere moralist, a mere teacher; He is a Saviour, and to save He had to suffer. That is why as the central, cardinal achievement of Christ's life it is asserted that He suffered. People sometimes speculate as to whether Jesus Christ would have come into the world if there had been no sin. Some great divines like Bishop Westcott think He would, in order to be humanity's perfection and crown, but the speculation is rather a vain and futile one. What we do know is that our Lord's actual coming was conditioned by sin; He came because He saw us broken and enslaved by sin; He came because He saw us exposed to the doom and death of sin; He came to bring us release from the penalty and power of sin. And to win us that release He had to suffer. His dying was His great life-work; His Cross was His great achievement. The one great, vital, all-important fact of His life is this—"He suffered under Pontius Pilate." He suffered all His life through! "For ever on His burdened heart, a weight of sorrow hung!" All His days He bore upon His own soul the ache and shame of human sin. But the suffering

culminated in His Cross and Passion. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree; "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried," and from His suffering comes our release; out of His death our life springs. We are "loosed from our sins by His blood." "In Him we have the redemption even the remission of our sins." And it is the perfect humanity of Jesus that gives this efficacy to His sufferings, and that makes His death an atoning sacrifice. It is impossible to attempt in this sermon a theory of the atonement. In fact, no theory will wholly explain what happened on the Cross, but these two things I see in the Cross, and they help me to understand why it is a fountain of release and of life.

1. In the first place, the Cross is the expression of God's righteous and holy wrath against sin. "The wages of sin is death," says the Apostle. And in the Cross I see Jesus, real man, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, taking all the doom and woe of our sin upon His own heart. He Himself did not sin, but He so completely identified Himself with us, His brethren, that He felt our sin as if it were His very own. Indeed Paul is very bold and says, "He who knew no sin became sin for us." He exhausted the curse and doom of it. And it was as man He did all this. He did it all in the name of the race and as its representative. In Him, so to speak, humanity suffered the awful doom of sin, and

confessed that the law of God was holy, just and good.

2. In the second place, the Cross is the sacrifice to God of a perfect obedience. Here is One who did no sin, neither was guile in His mouth! Here is One who always did the things that pleased God! Here is One who shrank from no sacrifice involved in the doing of His Father's will! Here is One who became obedient unto death even the death of the Cross! And it was a real Man who offered this sacrifice of obedience. Herein lies its saving significance. It comes out of the very bosom of humanity. Here is humanity in the person of the Man, Christ Jesus, completely and fully satisfying the demands of the holy law of God. When I think of all this, I can understand how it is that for Christ's sake we are pardoned and released; I can understand how it is there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For in Christ Jesus the doom and death of sin have already been exhausted and absorbed, and "in Christ Jesus" we share in the merits of His perfect sacrifice. All that Christ did as man is attributed to every brother of His who is "in Him." All that Christ did, He did as man and in the name of humanity, and all other men are forgiven and received "in Christ"—we are accepted "in the Beloved."

That is the Gospel of our Lord's humanity. If the Divinity of Christ is the ground of

our knowledge of God, His humanity is the ground of our faith in the atonement and the forgiveness of sin. "He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried," and out of that infinite sacrifice the hope of the world is born. And I preach that Gospel of redemption. The Lord Jesus suffered for the sins of the world. As man, and in the name of humanity, He bore sin's pain and offered the perfect sacrifice, and now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. And the one question we have to ask ourselves is this. Are we in Christ Jesus? Do we feel we are free from the law of sin and death? Do we know that we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son? I know my own heart and life too well to venture in my own merit to face the shining of the great white throne! For if God should mark iniquity how should I or anyone else stand before him? But I believe in Jesus Christ, who was "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." I remember His death, I remember His perfect obedience; I remember that the virtues of His death and the merits of His obedience become mine if I am "in Him." And so I shelter myself "in Him"! I make the merits of His death and passion my own;

> "So in the Father's courts, my glorious dress
> Shall be the garment of His righteousness."

V

THE RESURRECTION

"For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."—1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

"The third day He rose again from the dead."—Apostles' Creed.

In the two sermons I devoted to the consideration of the Divinity of Christ, I laid most stress upon the self-consciousness of Jesus; upon His vast and daring claims; upon His perfect holiness; and upon the effects He produces in the experience of believers. But when I come to examine the New Testament, I find that what made the Apostles definitely and finally sure that Jesus was the Son of God, the Divinely appointed Messiah, was the Resurrection. "He was declared to be the Son of God with power," Paul says, "by the resurrection from the dead." There would have been no Christianity, there would have been no Christian Church, but for the Apostolic belief in the Messiahship of Jesus, and it was the third day

that made them sure of it. I am by no means suggesting that Christ's matchless life had not produced a profound impression upon the disciples. It had. It made them cherish the hope, it almost made them convinced that He was Messiah. But then came the Cross and the grave. And whatever hope they may have cherished, the Cross shattered it. Had things ended at the Cross and grave, the world would have heard no suggestion that Jesus was the Son of God. But the hope that had been shattered by the Cross revived and became more than a hope, it became a conviction and a certainty as a result of the happenings of the third day. That is the genesis of the Apostolic faith as Peter describes it in his great Pentecost sermon. "This Jesus," he declares to the crowd, "did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. . . . Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." The apostles' assurance of Christ's Messiahship was born of His Resurrection. By many infallible proofs they saw Him alive after His passion, and by that they knew He was God's everlasting Son.

I have said that the Divinity of our Lord was a fundamental truth of the Christian religion. When I find in turn that faith in Christ's Divinity springs out of His Resurrection, I am moved to say that the fact of the Resurrection

is the central and fundamental fact of the Christian religion. For let us never forget that Christianity is not a speculative system, it is not a philosophical theory. It is what Bishop Chavasse called a *factual* Religion, and the central fact of all is the Resurrection. That is the place the apostle Paul assigns to it. He says frankly and plainly that the whole fabric of the Christian faith depends upon the fact of the Resurrection. If Christ be not raised, he declares, faith is vain, preaching is vain, the witness of the Apostles is an imposture, the promise of forgiveness is a deceit, and the hope of a beyond is an illusion ; in a word, the whole fabric of the Christian religion comes crashing to the ground. As one great writer puts it : "If it be proved that no living Christ ever issued from the tomb of Joseph, then that tomb becomes the grave not of a man but of a religion, with all the hopes built on it and all the splendid enthusiasm it has inspired." It is into the grounds upon which our belief in this central and all-important fact rests that I want now briefly to inquire.

WHAT IS THE FACT ?

First of all, let us be perfectly clear as to what the fact is. By the Resurrection of Jesus the New Testament does not mean simply that His Spirit survived death. Many people nowadays are inclined to reduce it to the limits of a

spiritual resurrection. They tell us that what became of the body of Christ is of no account at all. "If," says Harnack, "the Resurrection meant nothing but that a deceased body of flesh and blood came to life again, we should make short work of this tradition." Well, no one maintains that that is all the Resurrection means. But the New Testament unequivocally asserts that it includes it. Like all pious Jews the disciples believed in the survival of the spirit. They would need no assurance that in that sense Jesus was immortal. To assert that the Resurrection means nothing more than a spiritual survival, is to say that the Apostles spent their strength and risked their lives in claiming for Jesus what every one freely granted in the case of Moses and David and Elijah, and Isaiah, and every other good and holy man. But no one can read the New Testament without seeing that the essence of the Resurrection story is this, that the Apostles claimed for Jesus something which differentiated Him from every other person—however great and good—in human history; something which put Him in a class absolutely by Himself. They do not simply say that His Spirit survived—that went without saying. What they say is, that at a certain specific point of time—the morning of the third day—Jesus Himself came back to them. They saw Him and spoke to Him. They recognised His face and form. People

who say the bodily Resurrection does not matter miss the entire point of the narrative. It was not a " subtle spiritual influence " the Apostle talked about. It was not to the helpfulness of such an influence they felt constrained to bear witness. What they announced to the world (and remember, they risked their lives in the announcing of it) was this, that on the third day the grave in Joseph's garden was empty, that Jesus Himself in the totality of His personality came back to them. That was the stupendous fact upon which the Christian Church was based; that is the stupendous fact upon which to this day it stands.

THE EVIDENCE

Now, seeing that so much depends upon the fact of the Resurrection, it is essential that it should be adequately and sufficiently witnessed. What is the witness for it ? Let me, as briefly as I know how, sum it up. The story, of course, is told us in the four Gospels. They tell us of men and women who saw Christ, and talked with Him and touched Him after He was risen from the dead. They tell us of sceptical folk like Thomas who, by the overwhelming and convincing character of the evidence, were simply constrained to believe that the stupendous event had actually taken place. You may tell me there are discrepancies between the various accounts. I freely and frankly admit

it. But there is scarcely an event in history which, if examined in the same microscopic way, would not reveal similar divergencies. There are discrepancies, strange and startling discrepancies, for instance, in the accounts given by the Duke of Wellington, Napoleon, and Marshal Ney respectively, of the battle of Waterloo. But no one dreams of making these discrepancies an excuse for refusing to believe that such a battle ever took place. The discrepancies in the Gospel narrative furnish equally little excuse for doubting the *fact* of the Resurrection, which, amid all their differences, all four Gospels unite to assert. But the stories of the Gospels are not our only, or even our oldest, witness. As every one knows, many of the Epistles contained in the New Testament were written prior to the Gospels. Take the Pauline letters, for instance. There are two letters—the two to the Thessalonians—which everyone admits to be Paul's own handiwork. There are four others—the great group which includes Galatians, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians—whose authenticity, as Dr. Mackintosh says, no sane critic dreams of challenging. Now, looking at these letters—all of them written between the years 50 and 60 A.D.,—what do we find? We find that belief in the Resurrection was the belief of the whole Church. The story of the empty grave was no myth, as some would have us believe, which came into

existence after the lapse of years. Within five-and-twenty years of the occurrence of the Resurrection we find it accepted as a fact, not for one moment to be doubted, in places as far removed as Galatia, Corinth and Rome. And not Galatia, and Corinth and Rome only, but wherever the Christian preachers went, and wherever Christian communities were to be found, there the Resurrection of Jesus was believed in *as a historic fact*. In this chapter from which my text is taken, Paul gives, shall I say, a *précis* of the evidence on which belief in this stupendous and unparalleled fact was based. He does not profess to give all the evidence. The evidence of the women for instance is not referred to. I think Paul picks out only that evidence that has, shall I say, Apostolic authority. Glance your eye over it. First, says the Apostle, Christ was seen of Peter; then of the twelve; then of more than five hundred brethren at once, the greater part of whom were still alive; then He was seen of James; and, last of all, of himself. Nothing could be plainer, simpler, more straightforward. Paul was writing to keen and quick-witted Greeks. He gives them chapter and verse for his story. He refers them by name to men still alive who had seen the Lord after His passion, and who could be questioned and cross-examined as to what they had seen. He offers himself for cross-examination, for "last of all," he says, "as unto one born out of due time,

He appeared to me also." What a tremendous witness to the reality of the Resurrection is the conversion of Paul! I know some say it was only an ecstatic vision Paul saw on the way to Damascus, but the facts put such a suggestion entirely out of court. First of all, Paul himself draws a sharp distinction between what happened on the way to Damascus and the rapturous visions that came to him in the course of his Christian life. These latter came to him again and again; but the appearance of the Lord was given to him but once; and to this signal, unique, objective appearance of Jesus He attributes his conversion, and upon it he bases his claim to be as true an Apostle as Peter or James or John; for, like them, he too had seen the Lord. And, in the second place, the psychological condition of St. Paul at the time makes the suggestion that the Damascus appearance was nothing more than a subjective vision absolutely impossible. Visions come to believers not to unbelievers. They come to men and women when rapt in meditation and adoration. But Paul was on his way to Damascus to persecute; he was exceedingly mad against the Christians; he hated their faith as blasphemy; he hated them as apostates. That such a man should suddenly take to seeing visions of the glorified and living Christ is absurd! Paul did not believe Christ was alive at all; he believed that, in persecuting Christianity, he was persecuting

an imposture and a lie. It must have taken something overwhelmingly impressive and real to arrest Paul in mid-career, and to turn the persecutor into a believer. Nothing but a real objective appearance of Christ will satisfy the facts of the case. The conversion of Paul is itself a mighty testimony to the reality of the Resurrection. Notice, therefore, what we have in the way of evidence. Within twenty-five years of the event, we have thousands of people up and down the world persuaded of its reality, because they had heard the simple and straightforward story from the lips of men who had seen the Lord. Here are the names given of men who were still alive, who might be questioned and cross-examined by any who were sceptically disposed. Here is the witness of the chief antagonist and persecutor of the Christian Church, who says that he was turned from persecuting to preaching because Jesus Himself met him in the way. What are we to say to this evidence? Looking at the mass and weight of it I cannot agree with Harnack that the Resurrection story is an untrustworthy tradition. I find myself endorsing rather the verdict of Ewald—a great German scholar of an earlier generation—" that no fact in history is more certain than that Jesus rose and appeared to His disciples and that His appearance was the beginning of their work in the world."

THE OBJECTION

And yet this is the strange situation that faces us, that this fact so fully witnessed, so strongly vouched for, is doubted by some and denied by others. How comes this about? Well, it is part and parcel of the general disbelief in supernaturalism. People who deny the Resurrection do so really on *a priori* grounds. That is to say, they do not deny the Resurrection because they find the evidence insufficient; but they reject and repudiate the evidence because they deny the Resurrection. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, they start from the position that a Resurrection is in the nature of things impossible, and so they set themselves to explain away the evidence on which it rests. Strauss, the great German critic, for instance, says quite frankly that he starts from the naturalistic position and is bound to find a naturalistic explanation for the Resurrection story, or else his whole view of the life of Jesus falls to the ground. Now, had there been time I could have said a good deal about this denial of the possibility of the supernatural. It is one of the most arrogant assumptions ever made. When it says that such and such a thing cannot happen because it is against law, it takes for granted what needs still to be proved, and though it does all this in the name of science, it is utterly unscientific in method. The true scientific method is to

examine the facts and then form a theory; and not first form a theory and then flout and repudiate and deny the facts. But, leaving these theoretical considerations, I want to mention some of the practical difficulties that attend a denial of the Resurrection story. Assuming that Peter and James, and the twelve, and the five hundred and Paul himself were all mistaken, let us ask what it was that did really happen to Christ. For, quite obviously, something happened, otherwise the belief in the Resurrection becomes unintelligible. What was that something? We are practically shut up to one of two alternatives. I cannot express them better than Dr. Fairbairn does in his great chapter on the Resurrection in his "Studies in the Life of Christ." Either (1) Christ died and did not rise; or (2) as the Apostles uniformly assert, Christ died and rose.

I am not forgetting that the older rationalists held a third theory, namely this, that *Christ did not die but only swooned*. I am not going to waste time in discussing this particular theory. Its absurdities are so great that it has been laughed completely out of court. To begin with, it ignores the strictness of the Roman discipline. It was characteristic of that discipline that, although Jesus was obviously dead, to make assurance doubly sure, the soldier thrust his lance into His side. Then it assumes that it was the vision of a half dead Jesus, exhausted, wounded, and with bleeding hands and pierced

side, that created in the Apostles their exultant belief in Him as the Prince of Life! It assumes that the sight of this broken, mangled, slowly dying Jesus created in the Apostles their passionate belief in His victory over death, and sent them forth valiantly to preach His Resurrection! The theory is a tissue of wild and silly impossibilities. Strauss himself gave the *coup de grace* to it. The only marvel is that a theory so monstrously absurd could ever be seriously held by reasonable men at all. In this matter of the Resurrection, we are really shut up to these two alternatives: Christ died and did not rise, or Christ died and rose.

THE DILEMMA

Let us take the first alternative to begin with. That is the position taken up by the various objectors to the supernatural. They say *Christ died but did not rise.* Now let us examine into the results and consequences of this position. Before doing so, I ought however to make this remark. Scholars of all schools are agreed that the disciples really *believed* that a resurrection had taken place. The after-history of the Church, the readiness of the Apostles to suffer and die for the faith they preached are quite inexplicable, except on the supposition that the disciples really believed that Christ had risen from the dead. The extremest critics admit the honesty and good faith of the disciples.

Their contention is that they were mistaken; that they mistook a subjective experience for an objective fact. They account for their mistake in various ways. This is how one of them puts it: "The great myth of Christ's bodily revival is due to the belief on the part of the disciples that such a soul could not become extinct. It was that faith that produced the visions of which the Scripture record tells us." Others, again, tell us that it was the visions that created the faith. But, one way or another, the vision-theory seems to hold the field. Thus, according to Renan, the belief in the Resurrection is simply the result of the creative power of love and enthusiasm. "Heroes," says the imaginative Frenchman, "do not die. That adored Master had filled the circle of which He was the centre with joy and hope; could they be content to let him rot in the tomb?" The empty tomb—how emptied no one can tell—helped to make them liable to hallucination. The actual process began with Mary Magdalene. She was an "imaginative creature," we are told. In the dim dawn of morning she saw a man in the garden, and she imagined it was Jesus. The miracle of love was accomplished, and to Mary's vivid imagination and passionate heart the Resurrection became a *fact*. Mary set an example that was infectious. After she imagined she had seen Christ, others imagined they saw Him too, until the whole company of

disciples imagined they had seen him, and so the stories of the Resurrection appearances arose. Now let us as briefly as possible bring this theory to the test of facts. Before people take to seeing visions, there must be, as indeed the advocates of the theory pre-suppose, enthusiasm, expectancy, prepossession. Before any one could imagine he had seen Christ alive, the wish so to see Him, the expectation of seeing Him, must have already taken possession of the mind. Well, what are the facts in the case before us? Were the disciples on the tiptoe of expectancy? Were they possessed by the idea that they would soon see Christ again? Quite the contrary. The temper of the disciples was not one of enthusiasm and expectancy, but of despondency and despair; they gave up everything for lost when they saw Jesus dead on the Cross and buried in Joseph's grave. Even the "imaginative" Mary came to the grave only expecting to find the dead body of Jesus, and when she found the grave empty, all she "imagined" was that, possibly, the gardener had taken the body away. Far from expecting the Resurrection, the disciples were utterly sceptical about it; the reports of the women seemed to them to be but "idle tales." Thomas declined to believe even on the testimony of his fellow disciples. Christ had to reproach them all with unbelief and hardness of heart. In a word, the temper necessary to make the

vision-theory possible, was conspicuous by its absence from the disciples.

And further, while admitting that it is possible that one person might see a vision, it becomes incredible that a large number of persons, for several weeks and in different places, should be subject to the same hallucination. This theory assumes that the disciples, who were sane and sober men at other times, suddenly took both singly and conjointly to seeing phantoms; it assumes that these visions ceased just as suddenly as they began; it assumes that, without inquiry, the disciples accepted these visions as realities; it assumes that they accepted from a phantom of their own imagination instructions with regard to their future work in the world. What assumptions these are! and what a tax they put on one's power of belief! Keim says this subjective vision-theory is hopeless; he says there must have been some sort of objective appearance. Christ, Keim says, must have given His disciples a kind of telegram from heaven, to assure them after what looked like the crushing overthrow of the Cross, that He still lived in glory. But while Keim's theory, by admitting the supernatural element, comes nearer to the New Testament belief than Renan's, there is one objection that is as fatal to the one as to the other. Every variety of vision-theory finds an insurmountable difficulty in the empty grave.

We know that within a few weeks of the crucifixion, Peter was preaching in Jerusalem and the burden of his message was this: "that Jesus, whom ye crucified, hath God raised up." It is an indisputable fact that the Resurrection was the most prominent topic in the Apostolic preaching. How is it, then, if it was only a phantasm that the disciples had seen, that the Jews did not crush the whole imposture and deceit by producing the body of Christ? One of the greatest impostures of these very days of ours was so shattered. The great bubble of the Druce mystery was pricked by an examination of the grave. In the fourth chapter of the Acts we find Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, and Peter roundly declares to the Jewish aristocracy gathered there: "Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, hath God raised from the dead." Now, if the appearances of Christ were mere phantasms, visions, His body must have been somewhere. If it was still in Joseph's tomb why did not the Sanhedrin produce it, and so strangle for ever the lie the Apostles told? Why did they not produce the body? They did not produce it, because they could not; they could not challenge the Apostles' statement, because, as a matter of fact, the grave was empty. But someone may say: "May not the body have been in the hands of the disciples themselves?" But that lands us in difficulties greater still.

To begin with, it sacrifices the honesty of the disciples. All admit that they did truly believe in a Resurrection. The after-history of the Church is only possible on that assumption; but to assume that they preached a Resurrection while all the time the body of Christ was in their possession, is to say, not that they were honest and mistaken, but that they were deliberate, determined and wilful impostors. And notice further what it brings us to; it assumes that the Apostles suffered, bled and died for a lie; that they risked liberty and life preaching Christ crucified and risen, while all the time they *knew* that He was dead. Can anyone conceive such a thing possible? Can anyone believe that men—with no selfish advantage to gain—would deliberately risk their lives for what they knew to be false? The thing is utterly incredible! This theory, that Christ died but did not rise, goes to pieces and becomes quite impossible of belief when tested by the facts.

THE ONLY FAITH

There is only one other alternative, and that is to believe that the disciples were not mistaken, but that Jesus *verily died and verily rose again.* Why should it be thought a thing incredible with us that God should raise the dead? I know the Resurrection is a stupendous and solitary event, but I need some such stupendous and solitary event to explain the

after history of the world. I have quoted the direct evidence to the fact of the Resurrection already, but the direct evidence is not so impressive as the indirect evidence supplied by the course of after events.

It is only some such stupendous fact as the Resurrection that will account for *the change in the disciples*. When Christ hung on the Cross and lay in the grave, they were a band of broken, disappointed, spiritless men; shortly afterwards, however, we find them hopeful, daring, fearless. Those timid men, who locked themselves up in the Upper Room for fear of the Jews, on a sudden become brave as lions, and bear their witness without flinching before governors and kings. They account for the change by saying that they had seen their Lord alive. That is a sufficient explanation, and nothing else is.

It is only the fact of the Resurrection that accounts for the *changed views* of the disciples. Prior to Christ's death, they had dreamed of earthly dominion and material splendour; they had been parochial and narrow in their outlook; the kingdom of God, in all their thinking of it, was to be a restored Israel. But later on, their idea of Christ's Kingdom was that of a spiritual kingdom, which was to embrace the wide world, into which Gentiles as well as Jews were free to enter. What gave these men, steeped in

Jewish prejudices, their new and broader views? The account they give is that Jesus, after His Resurrection, gave them their world-wide commission. That will sufficiently account for the change and nothing else will. It is only the fact of the Resurrection that accounts for *the existence of the Church.* Had the Cross been the end the disciples would have been scattered to their homes, and the infant Christian Society would have dissolved ; it was the Resurrection that gave birth to the Church, and it is the Resurrection that has kept the Church in being. The Church lives because Jesus lives. To say that Jesus never rose is to leave the Church unexplained. It is to say that the mightiest, noblest, most beneficent society the world has ever seen has a falsity and a lie at the very heart of it. " If this thing be of men," said Gamaliel, long ago, " it will come to nought." If the Resurrection had been a lie, the Church would have perished ages since. I look at this Church, which has done so much and suffered so much ; which has gone through fire and through water, but against which the gates of hell have never prevailed ; which, down the centuries, has proceeded from strength to strength ; and I want to know the secret of her life. The Resurrection of Jesus is sufficient explanation, and nothing else is.

It is the fact of the Resurrection that accounts for *the converting and saving power of*

the Christian message. "Can faith in a dead man save you?" was the question placarded on the London walls some years ago. No! faith in a dead man can save no one. But week by week men are being saved in our midst; week by week men are being regenerated and redeemed. Whose work is it? It is the work of the living Christ. The Resurrection of Jesus is sufficient explanation of these stupendous changes, and nothing else is.

It is the fact of the Resurrection that accounts for *the experiences of Christians.* There are people amongst us who are able to overcome temptation, to fight against sin, to bear trial bravely, to face sorrow cheerfully. How do they manage it? They themselves say by union with a living Saviour. "It is all quite true," said one to me, after facing life's bitterest sorrow, "He never leaves us; He has been with *me.*" I look at these people in their serenity and cheerfulness and patient endurance. The fact of the Resurrection and the living Lord explains it all, but nothing else can. What are you to say to all these things: to the witness of the Apostles and the five hundred, to the change in the twelve, to the conversion of Paul, to the existence of the Church, to the Christian Sunday, to the converting power manifested in our midst to-day, to the experience of the living Christ possessed by innumerable saints? What are you to say to these things? They

are as veritable proofs of our Lord's Resurrection to you and me, as the sight of the nail prints and the spear gash were to Thomas of old. The Resurrection is no myth, no fancy, no wild imagination, but a solid fact. Christ went down to the grave and came out of it; He went down into the strong man's house and bound him; He has taken Death and captivity captive; He lives to-day to be the Friend and Brother, and sufficient Helper of all who look to Him and seek His aid. Yes, it is all true, "the third day He rose again from the dead." And what shall we do with this Jesus who died and rose again? Can we do less than Thomas did? Can we do anything but fall at His feet and say: "My Lord and my God"?

VI

THE SECOND ADVENT AND JUDGMENT

"But when the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all the nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats."—MATT. XXV. 31, 32.

"From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."—APOSTLES' CREED.

I am omitting from this series of sermons on the Creed any detailed consideration of the Ascension of Christ; not because I consider the truth of the Ascension to be unimportant; but partly because in one of my published volumes there is a sermon on the Ascension, and I do not want to repeat what I have there said; and partly because I regard the Ascension—as indeed the very phrasing of the Apostles' Creed implies—as involved in the fact of the Resurrection. When Jesus rose again from the dead on the morning of the third day it was not to resume the old life He had lived before dying. You remember, when Mary recognised Jesus in the Garden, the first impulse

was to clasp her dear Lord's feet. She thought that the return of Christ meant the resumption of the old relationships. But Jesus gently and lovingly corrects her: "Touch me not," He said to her, "for I am not yet ascended to the Father." He had not risen from the dead in order to resume His old life; He had risen from the dead in order to enter into glory. The Resurrection was incomplete without the Ascension. His Resurrection implied and involved His departure from the earth into the spiritual realm; He only delayed His entrance upon the glorified life of heaven until by His repeated appearances to the disciples He had convinced them that He was alive. When that task was accomplished our Lord entered upon His glory; "He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father Almighty." There is a mighty Gospel in this truth of our Lord's Ascension. At first sight it appears quite remote from any practical bearing upon our daily life. As a matter of fact, however, it touches it most nearly and vitally. It brings us, first of all, the assurance of our Lord's *abiding and universal Presence.* While He lived His earthly life, He was a local and limited Presence; when He ascended far above all the heavens, He did so that He might fill all things. That is to say, the local and limited Presence became a universal spiritual Presence. No soul need travel far to find the Lord; He is

at our sides ; in real, though unseen presence, He is with us in our temptations, in our fierce conflicts, in our heart-breaking sorrows ; with us always ! And His Presence spells power and conquest and absolute security. Like the three Hebrew youths we are preserved in the fiercest furnace of temptation and trial, because there is One with us like unto the Son of Man.

And the Ascension preaches to us, not simply the Gospel of Christ's abiding Presence, it preaches to us also the Gospel of His *triumph.* That is the special aspect of the Ascension which the Creed emphasises : " He ascended into heaven, He sitteth down on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." The " right hand of God " means the place of supreme authority and power. In Scripture the " right hand of God " always means the omnipotent energy of God, and to " sit down on the right hand of God " means to be clothed with all the energy and power of omnipotence. That is Christ's condition to-day ; all the energies of God are His. That is His place to-day " on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." We are tempted sometimes to think that evil is supreme. Wickedness seems so overwhelmingly strong, its forces seem so irresistible, that we begin to wonder whether sin and evil are not the mightiest things in the world. But it is not Satan I see on the world's throne, it is Jesus ! The battle after all is the Lord's, for Christ

"sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty." "Sitteth," notice; sitteth in perfect ease and calm! Not "standeth," as if anxious about the issues of the fight! but "sitteth" as one who is quite sure of the result; as one who knows the victory is already won. We fret and worry ourselves into panics and despairs down here, but there is no fret or worry, no doubt or fear up yonder. I look up, and in heaven I see confidence, assurance, the certainty of triumph, for I see our Lord sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from henceforth *expecting*—not hoping, or wishing, or praying, but *expecting*—till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. That is the vision we need to see just now; there is a Gospel in it for our times. We are passing through times of stress and strain. The world seems to be gaining upon the Church, statistics seem to speak of failure and reaction, and we grow despondent and discouraged. The cure for our discouragements is the remembrance of our Lord's Ascension. What is to be the issue of the long, fierce conflict? The issue is already settled; the victory is already won; death and hell have already been taken captive. Away with all faithless doubts and fears! "Our Jesus is gone up on high; He sitteth down at the right hand of the Father Almighty."

With that brief word then, I pass by the subject of the Ascension, and proceed to deal

briefly with the next article of the Creed, which says that "from thence," that is, from His seat at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, "He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." This sentence deals with "things to come," and confronts us with the dark and troublous questions of Christian eschatology. It makes two statements; it says, in the first place, that Christ is coming again; it asserts, in the second place, that this "coming" is associated with judgment. Now, I am not saying anything that is new to you when I say that the questions of the Second Advent and the Judgment are involved in great difficulty and obscurity. The clearest thinkers hesitate here; the most dogmatic theologians falter when they speak upon these high topics. Dr. Orr—most orthodox of divines—says quite frankly that the New Testament does not supply us with the elements of a complete solution, and we ought not to attempt one. The one thing that is absolutely out of place in the discussion of these great themes is dogmatism. There are questions involved about which the reverent and candid student will frankly say: "I do not know." There are other things beside the date of the Second Advent which the Father has kept within His own authority; and it is our wisdom to leave them with Him, simply and humbly believing that the Judge of all the earth will do right.

But while there are many things hidden from us, we know enough to be able to say, with the Holy Church throughout the centuries, "I believe that from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Let me speak with you briefly about the two assertions involved in that confession.

THE SECOND ADVENT

First, then, we have here the assertion of *our Lord's return*. Every one who knows anything about early Church History; every one who, indeed, has read, with any attention and care, the Epistles of the New Testament, knows perfectly well that the early Christians lived in the constant and daily expectation of their Lord's return. They scanned the skies morning by morning for the first flaming of His advent feet. They bore up in face of trouble, scorn, poverty and persecution, strengthened by the hope that their Lord would soon come back again in power and great glory. The awe of it was perpetually upon their spirits; the exultation of it was continually in their hearts. The greatest trial to their faith was the fact that the Lord delayed His coming; that day after day and year after year passed, and the Lord did not come to vindicate His cause and to glorify His own. Now, from one point of view, we may say that these early Christians were mistaken; but when we say that, let us be quite clear as to what we mean. They

made no mistake in expecting the Lord to return ; the mistake they made was in expecting Him to come back in a certain way, and at a certain date ; and if we begin to examine into the circumstances we can easily understand how the mistake arose. No one can read the Gospels without seeing that there is considerable confusion of thought in the great eschatological discourses. That confusion, again, is due to this fact that the disciples interpreted all that Jesus said about His return in the light of their preconceived ideas. They had been brought up to believe that the establishment of Messiah's Kingdom would follow immediately upon the revelation of Messiah's glory. The idea of the realisation of the Kingdom through slow and age-long processes was entirely foreign to them. When Christ was raised from the dead, and thus declared to be the Son of God with power, they expected that the kingdom of God would immediately appear, and the result was that they interpreted everything that Jesus said about His coming in accordance with their own traditional beliefs. And there were certain words that our Lord spoke which seemed to give colour to their hopes, and to justify their expectations. He had said to the High Priest at His trial : " Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." He had declared in the hearing of His disciples and a

great multitude, " Verily I say unto you, there be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Kingdom of God come with power." He had said about John in the hearing of Peter and the other disciples, " If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? " He gave to His hearers one day a solemn prediction of His coming to judgment; and gave them also certain signs of its approach, so that they might take warning by them and escape the impending doom; and He said it all as if it would come to pass while those who were listening to Him were still alive. I say there were many sayings of our Lord which gave colour to their expectation of an immediate return. On the other hand there were certain words of His which spoke of it as a " far-off Divine event." The Kingdom of God was like leaven—its realisation was a silent and prolonged process. The harvest was at " the end of the world." Of its day and hour no one knew, not even the Son, but the Father only. All of which makes it quite clear that while the disciples interpreted every word Christ spoke about His return, as referring to that triumphant and immediate return in glory which they had been taught and trained to expect, Christ Himself had several " returns " in His mind. Any one who reads the Gospels carefully can recognise two or three " returns " of which Christ spoke.

1. First of all, He talked of "returning" in the person and presence of His Spirit. It was with the promise of this return that He comforted the hearts of His disciples on the eve of His passion. "I will not leave you desolate, I come unto you." And He gloriously fulfilled His word on the Day of Pentecost. He came again and He remained with them always. They were conscious of His Presence. "At my defence," says Paul, "no one took my part, but all forsook me. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me."

2. In the second place, He returned in striking and subduing fashion in the fall of Jerusalem. No one can read the great eschatological discourse contained in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew without feeling that that solemn and awful prediction of a coming in judgment was fulfilled in tragic fashion in the destruction of the Holy City. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of that historical event. It was God's doom upon the nation which had rejected His Son. It was the great event that finally severed the bonds that united Christianity to Judaism, and set it free to undertake its mission to the wide world. That was the "coming" of which He had spoken to the High Priest. That was the "coming" of which He had said that there were some of them standing by who should by no means taste of death until they had seen it.

And when we confess with the Holy Church throughout all the world that Jesus shall come again, we mean these two things still. We mean, first of all, that He comes *in every movement of His spirit.* When people talk about the Second coming of Christ, for the most part they think of that catastrophic coming which shall bring the present stage of things to its final end. But Christ is continually coming again, and we need to have eyes open and hearts sensitive to these comings of the Lord. He comes surely in every holy impulse and every good desire. He comes in every softening of the heart and every good resolve of the will. He comes in every pleading of His Spirit. Still it is true of Him that He does not strive nor cry, neither is His voice heard in the streets, but He is ever coming. When at a service like this, for instance, you feel the call and the pull of the higher life, you know what is happening. "The Master is come and calleth for thee."

And we mean further that Jesus Christ comes in the *great events and crises of human history.* History to us is not atheistic. We believe Christ is in it. And in the great crises that periodically occur He comes in a special and unmistakable way. The Fall of Jerusalem was not the only historic "coming" of our Lord. He came again when the massive fabric of Roman civilisation fell before the attacks of Goths and Huns. He came with the birth of Modern Europe in the

thirteenth century. He came when Martin Luther shook and shattered the edifice of the papacy, and brought reality back to religion, and gave spiritual freedom to half a continent. He came at the time of the Evangelical Revival, when John Wesley and George Whitefield aroused a torpid and dead England to spiritual life. He came to America in the agony of the Civil War. You remember how Julia Ward Howe wrote of it :—

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord :
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored ;
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of His terrible swift sword ;
His truth is marching on.

"I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps ;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps ;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps ;
His day is marching on.

"He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat ;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.
Oh ! be swift, my soul, to answer Him ! be jubilant my feet !
Our God is marching on."

And so He comes perpetually to nations. Who knows but that in the moral crisis through

which this land of ours is passing, the Lord may not be visiting us? History, I repeat, is not atheistic. In all great movements and crises, when the old order changeth, giving place to new, whoso hath eyes to see may discern the coming of the Son of Man.

THE FINAL COMING

But while we mean by this article of the Creed that Christ comes continually in these various ways, we mean also that we believe that Christ will come back again some day and take unto Himself His great power and reign. As Dr. Denney puts it: "If we are to retain any relation to the New Testament at all, we must assert the personal return of Christ as Judge of all." The early Christians were not wrong in their hope; they were wrong only in their dates. We, too, look for the coming of our Lord from heaven. There are some who say that to assert the return of Christ in power is to put "an arbitrary term to the course of history." They say that by a gradual process of growth the Kingdom of God will, in time, realise itself. But there is nothing unethical—as they would have us think—about belief in the Second Coming of Christ in power and great glory. On the contrary, there is, as Dr. Orr says, "an inherent fitness, if not a moral necessity, about such a return of Christ at the end of the world as the New Testament uniformly asserts."

I can see two considerations which make the Second Coming of Christ to me not matter of revelation simply, but moral and rational also. This is the first. *Christ came not simply to establish the Kingdom of God but to consummate it.* The process of realising the Kingdom is to be completed. Sin and evil are not to be allowed to thwart its progress for ever; tares and wheat are only to grow together till harvest. The moral condition of the world is not to be for ever that of moral suspense, evil and good balancing each other, and perpetually contending for the dominion. Righteousness is to spring upon the earth. God is to be all in all. Yet here comes one of the latest and best writers on the social teaching of Christianity to tell us that we are bound to recognise that a point may be reached when the forces of human nature will be insufficient to carry the world a step further on its onward and upward progress. The consummation of the process can only come through some exercise of the supreme power of God. Then and only then shall we see the new social order. And that is exactly what the coming of Christ means. It is not to be a kind of seesaw between good and evil for ever. The Lord will vindicate His own cause. The Faithful and True shall ride forth to make war. And He is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood, and His name is called the Word of God. And out of His

mouth proceedeth a sharp sword that with it He should smite the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His garment and on His thigh a name written "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." It is this Second Coming of Christ that gives rationality and meaning to the groaning and travail of the world. Unless some such consummation awaits us at the finish, all the agony and striving of the centuries have been in vain, all the blood of the martyrs has been shed in vain; all our struggles and labours have been for nought, and history is bereft of meaning. It is the sure promise of the coming of the Lord that lends meaning to history; that justifies all our labour and conflict and travail. Maranatha—The Lord will come.

> "Evil at last shall fall,
> The good shall gain the victory,
> And God shall be all in all."

THE COMING AND JUDGMENT

And the second truth involved in the assertion of the Creed is this, that the *coming of the Lord is associated with judgment.* Every coming of the Lord is associated with judgment; inevitably and necessarily the coming of Christ to any soul is the judgment of that soul; it was so when He was here on earth; souls were judged by His very coming. "This child," said

Simeon, to the astonished Mary in the Temple, " is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel and for a sign which is spoken against." And so it came to pass. By His mere presence He divided men and separated them. There was a κρίσις, a "judging," wherever Christ appeared. Men's characters stood revealed. The bias of the soul declared itself. Men classified themselves; tried by the touchstone of His character, of their own accord, they took their stand, some on the right and others on the left. " God sent not His Son into the world," says John, " to judge the world," and yet the actual result of His coming was a judgment. " This is the judgment," he goes on to say, just a sentence or two further down, " that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil." He judged the world by His presence in it. The essential goodness of Peter and John and James and Zacchæus, and the essential evil of the chief priests and scribes, stood disclosed by contact with Jesus. And every coming of the Lord involves judgment still. His coming to us as individuals in the appeals and strivings of His Spirit implies a judging. The good heart and the evil heart stand revealed by the answer given to His pleadings and calls. Suppose that at this moment, Jesus presents Himself to us; and suppose we bow Him out of our heart and life; suppose we say

to him in effect: "We will not have Thee to reign over us!" The judgment has taken place! We have declared that evil is our good! We have placed ourselves amongst the goats upon the left hand.

And His coming to a nation in the great crises of its history implies and involves a judging. As Lowell says:—

> "Some great cause, God's new Messiah,
> Offering each the bloom or blight,
> Parts the goats upon the left hand,
> And the sheep upon the right,
> And the choice goes by for ever
> Twixt that darkness and that light."

The Reformation was a judging time. The Evangelical Revival was a testing time. Some mocked and sneered; others welcomed it as a great day of the Lord. And this time of the Lord's visitation is a testing time. The Lord is visiting England! In the stress and strain of this mighty moral conflict through which we are passing He is trying the hearts of the people of England. "Who is on the Lord's side, who?" is the challenge He issues to this people. He is sifting us out. The brave and the cowardly, the tepid and the zealous; the good soldiers and the mere camp followers. He is judging us all in these searching times. Judgment is a continuous and incessant process; His very presence either condemns or saves. But, while I believe in a continuous and incessant

process of judgment, I believe also in a *final judgment*; I believe that Christ will come again and judge the quick and the dead. That great and final coming will be marked by a "final and definitive judgment." I believe in this, not simply because the Bible asserts it, but again because, as it seems to me, both reason and justice demand it. The idea of a final judgment is, that, at last, full, complete, and absolute justice is done. Goodness meets with its due reward; sin meets with its fitting penalty. Now I believe, as indeed I have already stated, that judgment is continuous. God's judicial action begins down here; sin brings its penalty here and now. The talent that is neglected and abused is lost. Goodness wins its reward here and now. There is none that leaves father or mother or wife or children or lands for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, but receives a hundred-fold more in *this* life. We must not postpone judgment entirely till beyond the grave. No one more strenuously insisted upon it than Jesus did, that the good or ill men do bring their certain reward or inevitable penalty in the enrichment or impoverishment of the soul. At the same time, no one will pretend that full justice is done down here. Take the good man; every act of goodness, it is true, enlarges the capacity of his soul, but it does not bring him inward satisfaction and peace. The fact is, the better a man is the

more deeply conscious he is of his own shortcomings, and the more deeply he is pained by them. Why, a good man is often more pained by the recollection of a foolish word or one unhappy deed, than a bad man is by all his deeds of shame. Take the bad man; it is true that sin is punished by diminished capacity for good (and I do not minimise the awfulness of that loss), but the significant thing is this, that continuance in sin is often marked by a growing callousness and constantly lessening self-reproach. The penalty, as Dr. Forrest says, is one of loss, not of pain, and the "greatest criminal has the completest immunity from inward retribution." Does not all this seem to demand another and truer judgment?

Take another aspect of things. Confine your gaze to this life. Is it not the case that the wicked often seem to flourish like the green bay tree? And is it not also the case that the good often suffer and are martyred for their very goodness? People are fond of quoting Schiller's phrase "the history of the world is the judgment of the world." There is, of course, a truth in it; but the judgment of the world is a radically inadequate judgment; it does not do justice to the moral claims of the individual. If justice is to be done, if the righteousness of God is to be vindicated, there must be another and final judgment when every soul shall receive what is due to it.

And that is the great truth which our Lord asserts when He says that before Him will be gathered all the nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats ; and then full and perfect justice shall be done. The issues of every man's life shall be seen. God's righteous government shall be vindicated. Sin shall be recognised as sin, and shall find its doom: "Depart from me, ye cursed." Goodness and obedience shall be gloriously acknowledged, and shall meet their reward : "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom." It is in this final judgment, which the moral order of the world demands, that we express our belief when we say : "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."

There are many questions about this judgment that could be put to me and which I should find it impossible to answer. One thing, however, is quite clear. The New Testament asserts it ; the moral meaning of the world demands it : "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that we may receive the things done in the body according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad." And this further thing is clear, that, while happiness and bliss beyond thought are the reward of discipleship and loyal obedience, suffering and loss beyond expression are the sure and inevitable penalty of sin. We speculate in these

days as to the length of the punishment and the possibility of restoration. Many cherish the faith that God, in the long run, will not be defeated;

> "That not one life shall be destroyed
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God hath made the pile complete."

It is impossible to dogmatise. The "larger hope," as people term it, is only a "hope" at the best. The thing about which Scripture leaves us in no shadow of doubt is the immense, critical and decisive influence of this life. Upon the life we live momentous and eternal issues hang. I do not know what may happen in the endless ages of eternity; what I *do* know is that it is the gentle Christ who tells us that the broad way leads to destruction; that sin entails the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched; that some go to eternal punishment and some to eternal life. "You seem, sir," said Mrs. Adams to Dr. Johnson, in one of his despondent hours, when the fear of death and judgment lay heavy upon him, "to forget the merits of our Redeemer." "Madam," replied Johnson, with his usual blunt honesty, "I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that He will set some on His right hand and some on His left." Yes, my Redeemer has said that; and, remembering it, I will divest my message of no shred of its appeal. I am not going to speculate as to

what may happen in the dim and distant ages of eternity. What I do know is that sin will be judged. "From the right hand of God, Jesus shall come to judge the quick and the dead." But there is a way to face that judgment without fear. There is no condemnation to them that are "in Christ Jesus." The lovers and friends of Christ do not fear that great and awful day. They "love" their Lord's appearing.

VII

THE HOLY GHOST

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter (Advocate), that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth."—JOHN XIV. 16.
"I believe in the Holy Ghost."—APOSTLES' CREED.

IN discussing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit we are dealing with what theologians term the "third person in the Trinity." I am not going to enter upon any disquisition upon the Trinity, or upon the mutual relations of the three persons in the Godhead. These are high and abstruse themes, and the human intellect, with all its striving, is unable to grasp and comprehend them. But I do want to say this before we go a step further, that we have only a poor, thin and truncated faith, unless to our belief in God the Father Almighty and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord we can add this further *credo*: "I believe in the Holy Ghost." For, what does belief in the Holy Ghost mean? Express it in its very simplest form it means this—we believe that *God abides with man, and lives in him.* When we say "I believe in God, the Father Almighty," we confess

our faith in a Divine being, the great Cause, the fountain of all existence. When we go on to say "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord," we declare our faith that nineteen centuries ago, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, God took flesh, lived our life, died our death, and bridged the chasm that separates the human from the Divine. But suppose you stop there. What are we to say about God now? Has He returned to His remoteness and inaccessibility? When Jesus ascended into heaven, did God leave the world? After walking earth's ways with a few highly favoured men, did He then abandon men and cast them off? Peter and James and John and the rest of them, "companied" with God in the person of His Son. Is no one else to have Him for Companion? Has earth been left desolate and bare and cold? Are our hearts never to burn because we hear Him speak? Are our souls never to grow strong because we feel the clasp of His hand? Wistful desires arise within us, even as it is, as we read the story of the Gospels. We have it in our hearts to envy Peter and James and John their intimacy with the Lord. You remember how our child's hymn puts it:

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children as lambs to His fold,
I should like to have been with Him then."

But the wistful desire would become a perfect passion of regret if, when Jesus ascended into heaven, God left the world. The golden age would then be not in front but far behind. Our eyes would ever be turned to that blissful time nineteen centuries ago. All that would be left to us would be a sacred memory and the holy influence that streams from it. That is where we land ourselves if we stop at that article which expresses belief in the historic life of Jesus, completed as it was by the ascent into heaven. You leave men without their great Companion; you leave earth unlighted by the splendour and glory of the Divine presence. But we need not stop there. We go on to add: "I believe in the Holy Ghost," and that means that we need envy no saint or Apostle of ancient days his privileges; we need not envy Peter, nor even the disciple who leaned on the Lord's breast at the Supper. We are as highly blessed as they, for still we may keep company with the Lord; still we may hear the Lord speak; still we may clasp the Lord's hand; still we may gaze into the Lord's face. Our world is not a forsaken world; it is a sunlit world. God dwells still upon the earth, in the very midst of men. We can still enjoy closest, sweetest, dearest fellowship and communion with Him. He waits to be every man's Companion, Comforter, Helper, Friend; and this is the article of faith which involves and implies all that—

which brings to us the comfort and joy of the presence of God—"I believe in the Holy Ghost." For that is what that confession of faith at bottom amounts to. It is very easy to conjure up difficulties about the Personality of the Spirit; it is easier still to puzzle the mind with perplexing questions about the Trinity; but it is not to any theological theories or philosophic speculations we commit ourselves when we declare our belief in the Holy Ghost. What we *are* saying is that God Himself lives *with* man and *in* man; that we may "walk with God" just as truly and just as closely as Peter, James and John did, who were privileged to be the friends and intimates of the Son of God in the days of His earthly sojourn. That is exactly the meaning of the words of Christ in which He promised that after His departure the Comforter, or better, the Advocate, should come.

THE PROMISE OF CHRIST

You remember the circumstances. The disciples were in something like a panic over the announcement made to them by Christ that He was going away. At the bare word the world seemed to become a blank for these men! All the sunshine of life seemed to suffer immediate and total eclipse. For Jesus was everything to them. In a sense they had nothing in the world but Jesus! He was more

than their best friend. He was their all in all. For Him they had sacrificed fathers and mothers and home and friends and business and every earthly prospect. And now He was going! In response to His call they had embarked upon a new life. They had taken up their Cross and followed Him. It was not an easy life; it was a hard life, a toilsome life, a sacrificial life. Already they had been called upon to suffer trial and persecution for His Name's sake. But with Jesus at their side they had never faltered. With His presence to cheer and strengthen them, they had bravely held on their way. But now He was going! I say, at the bare announcement of the Lord's departure, the world became a blank to these disciples, and the whole edifice of their life seemed to fall crashing in ruin about their ears. And then to these panic-stricken disciples Jesus explains what His departure means. He had been as God to them. In Him God had touched the very springs of their life and entered into their souls. His going did not mean that God would forsake them. If He went, they would not be left desolate; God would send them another Advocate, another Helper, who would be to them all and more than Jesus Himself had been; who would bring them just the same sense of God's nearness and presence; who would inspire and help them just as effectively as Jesus Himself had done. This other Comforter,

this other Advocate, was the Spirit; and the Spirit was to abide with them for ever. That is the promise—the Spirit is to take Christ's place; He is to be to the Lord's disciples all, and more than all, that Jesus Himself had been. Jesus was Emmanuel, God with them. The Spirit was to be the abiding God *within* them. And the promise was fulfilled at Pentecost. The Spirit fell upon the disciples then. They knew then that God was with them still, as near to them as Christ Himself ever was. They went to their work in His companionship; they laid their plans under His guidance; they accomplished their tasks by His succour and help; they were led and ruled and succoured by the present Spirit of God. And it is in the Dispensation of the Spirit we live to-day. We have no longer the Incarnate Lord to speak to. The Master is no longer with us in bodily and visible presence. But we are not orphaned and God-forsaken any more than these first disciples were. We are still in closest and most blessed communion with God; He is as near to us, and as helpful to us, as He was through Christ to the first disciples. "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

THE HOLY GHOST AND THE WIDE WORLD

Now, before I turn to speak of the Holy Ghost and His work in the light of the New Testament, let me say just a word or two about

the work of the Holy Ghost in the world at large —pre-Christian and un-Christian. Each Whit-Sunday we celebrate the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit upon the first disciples; that great event was, in a very special sense, a "coming" of the Spirit. He came then with a fulness and power the world had never witnessed before; but let us not make the mistake of thinking that it was on that day of Pentecost the Spirit came upon men for the first time. We find the Spirit in the Old Testament. It is quite true that the writers of the Old Testament conceived of the Spirit rather as a Power than a Person, still, the Spirit is there. The Spirit of God came upon Bezaleel, the son of Uri, to make him equal to the task of adorning the tabernacle; the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, to fit him for the task of delivering Israel; the Spirit of the Lord came upon David, to equip him for the responsibility of kingship; and above everything else the Spirit of the Lord came upon this man and that and they prophesied; as Peter puts it in his Epistle: "they spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." And I will go further still and say that not only was the Holy Ghost at work in Israel in pre-Christian days, but no land and no people have been outside the sphere of the Spirit's operations. There have been great teachers and leaders of thought outside the Hebrew race. I think of men like

Gautama in India, Confucius in China, and Socrates and Plato in Greece. Measured by our Christian standard, of course they fall far short; but surely they were God's messengers to their race and to their time. They were, as Dean Farrar calls them, "seekers after God," and when I read their writings, with their dazzling visions of truth, with their lofty ethics, I have no difficulty in saying that the Spirit of God was at work in the minds and hearts of these men, and that they too spoke from God, moved by the Holy Ghost. Nor will I confine what I am saying to the outstanding leaders and thinkers of the race; it is true of every member of the race. "There is the light which lighteth every man coming into the world," says John, and the Holy Spirit is that light. God has His witness in every breast; He has left no man entirely bereft and desolate. In all the ethical ideals and moral strivings of man, I see the working of the Spirit of God. In every generous impulse, in every holy emotion, in every lofty aspiration, I see evidences of the Spirit's presence and operation. In the last resort, all good can be traced back to Him. As our familiar hymn puts it:

> "And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone."

But, while I believe the Spirit has been at work all down the ages and in all human hearts, I also believe that the Spirit has come in fuller power since our Lord's Ascension to heaven, and works most mightily in those who have given their hearts to the Lord's allegiance. This is in no way surprising. As a matter of fact, Christ made God more vivid and real to the world in every way; He opened, shall I say, new channels whereby the Divine power and grace could flow into and upon men. It is not at all wonderful, therefore, that Christian people should realise the presence of the Spirit, and should experience the power of the Spirit, in an altogether new and unexampled way. It is upon this Christian experience of the Spirit and His working that I want to concentrate attention for just a few minutes.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

It is impossible to dwell upon every function and office of the Spirit as described for us in the New Testament, for you may say that the whole of the Divine life in man is the care and sphere of the Spirit. I mean in this sermon to confine myself largely to the Spirit's work in the Church. That is the special aspect of His work which is suggested by the Creed. For this article about the Holy Ghost is closely connected with the article about the Holy Catholic Church. The one, indeed, is dependent upon the

other, and it is because there is a Holy Ghost that there is a Christian Church at all. Well, now, coming to discuss the work of the Spirit as far as the Church, the community of Christian people, is concerned, I find stress laid upon two things.

1. The Spirit is the *source of Christian enlightenment.* Recall again the condition of the disciples when Jesus Christ was leaving them. They had been in the fellowship of Christ for about two years. They had come to Him steeped to the very lips in Jewish materialism and prejudice. For two years they had been in Christ's school ; but they were painfully slow scholars. With a kind of fatal perversity they misunderstood and misinterpreted their Master. Think of their quarrels as to who should be greatest. Think of their intolerance. Think of their dream of material empire. Think of their obstinate refusal to contemplate the Cross. And now it had come to the last night. In less than twenty-four hours Jesus was to be taken from them ! Will any one pretend that just at this stage the disciples had really entered into sympathy with the mind of Christ ? Will any one assert that just at this point they were masters of Christian truth ? The disciples themselves were conscious of their lack ; they knew they needed teaching still. And that is the office which Jesus promises the Spirit shall perform for them. He is the Spirit

of Truth ; He is to lead them into all the Truth ; He is to bring to remembrance the things which Christ had told them ; He is to take of the things of Christ—things, perhaps, hidden and secret to them, when first uttered—and He is to reveal them unto them ; He is to teach them all things ; He is to lead them out into a complete understanding of Christ's mind, and a perfect sympathy with His purposes. And this was no vain promise. This is exactly what the Spirit did for these disciples ; He led them into the Truth ; He revealed Christ's will and purpose to them. You can see the process of enlightenment going on in the New Testament. Take the one matter of the universality of the Kingdom. When Christ left the disciples, they were as narrow in their notions as any Jews in the land ; they saw no place for Gentiles in the Kingdom ; but see how gradually the Spirit led them out into an understanding of Christ's purpose. First of all, the Samaritans receive the word. Then, at the impulse of the Spirit, Philip preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch and baptises him. Then, at the direct and imperious bidding of the Spirit, Peter goes to Cornelius, the Roman centurion, and baptises him. And then, finally, the Spirit thrust forth Barnabas and Saul into the work of evangelising the world, and so gradually the truth was brought home to the disciples and apostles that they shall come from the North and the South and the

East and the West, and sit down in the Kingdom of God.

And what the Spirit did for the disciples in the first century, He has continued to do for the Church throughout the ages. Think of the Canon of Scripture. There were many Gospels in existence besides the four we have in our New Testament. There were many Epistles besides those preserved for us here. But there is a vast difference between the Gospel of St. John and the Gospel of the Hebrews, let us say. There is a vast difference between the Epistle to the Ephesians and the Epistles of Barnabas. I compare the books in the Canon of Scripture with the books outside of it, and I cannot resist the conclusion that the Church was taught by the Spirit to select those writings that did really represent the mind of Christ, and to reject the others.

Think of the Creeds. I am by no means for imposing the Creeds upon the minds and consciences of men. But no one can read of the great controversies which rent the Church from time to time, and then study the Creeds in which the sifted beliefs of the Church found expression, without realising that, throughout the fury and the strife, the Spirit was watching over God's people and gradually leading them into a fuller and deeper perception of Christian truth.

Think of the condition of Christian belief at the present day. We have moved far in nineteen

centuries. Old forms of belief have perished. The path of the years is littered with the shreds of out-worn and cast-off dogmas. The changes, while they have been in process, have often caused anxiety and pain to godly people. But look back over the course of the centuries. Is it not true that on the whole we are nearer the mind of Christ, and have a better understanding of God than the Church ever possessed before? Does not the new sense of obligation to the world, as represented in the foreign missionary enterprise, mean that we have entered more fully into the mind of Christ? Does not the new sense of social obligation, the new feeling of brotherhood, mean that we understand a little better the mind of Jesus who came not to be ministered unto but to minister? And does not our new name for God, "Father," represent a growing understanding of the mind of Christ? I think of all these things, and I know the Holy Ghost has been working through the ages for the enlightenment of His people. He has been taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to us. It is not simply on the strength of what the New Testament says, but on the strength of what I see as actually having taken place in the world, that I say "I believe in the Holy Ghost," the Enlightener.

2. And the second point I will notice is this. The Spirit is the *source of the Church's empower-*

ment. The disciples when Christ left them felt not simply ignorant, but weak and helpless as well. The task He proposed for them was that of "going into all the world and making disciples of all the nations." It was a task to appal and terrify the stoutest heart. To the disciples it appeared impossible. And so it would have been, had it been a case of flinging twelve humble and illiterate Galileans against a serried world. But it was not a case of twelve men against the world. It was a case of twelve men *plus the Spirit.* "Ye shall receive *power* after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And that was the promise Christ made to these men in their weakness. "I will pray the Father," so reads the promise of my text, "and He shall give you another Comforter that He may be with you for ever." Another "Comforter," so reads our version; another "Paraclete" is what the Greek literally says. And the meaning of the word *Paraclete* is not "comforter" in our modern sense, it is rather "comforter" in the old sense, one who strengthens and fortifies. It means strictly "one summoned to the side of another for his help and succour," as, for instance, an advocate summoned to plead a defendant's case in court. Perhaps "helper," "encourager," "strengthener" represents best the meaning of the word. "Comforter" is too soft a word. It makes us think the Spirit's function is to soothe sorrow

and wipe away the tear. But the word really does not suggest so much the quiet room as the battlefield. It is an energetic, forceful, militant word. It implies conflict and struggle, and for the conflict and the struggle the Spirit is a *fortifier*. He lifts men above fear ; He reinforces them ; He gives them triumph in battle. And that is exactly what the Spirit proved to be to these first disciples.

And He has been a fortifier to the Church of Christ all the centuries since. It is impossible to explain the conquests of the early Church on natural grounds. You cannot put its vast and rapid spread down to the genius of its first preachers. There is only one way of accounting reasonably for it, and that is by saying the *excellency of the power was of God.* In other words, the Spirit of God was with the Apostles and first preachers, and in His conquering power they wrought righteousness, subdued kingdoms, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, and turned to flight armies of aliens. Nothing could withstand the onset of their attack. Rome itself was taken captive, and the Cross it once had scorned was inscribed upon its banners. And as it was in the early days, so has it been since. The Church is constantly addressing itself to vast and seemingly impossible tasks, and it is constantly achieving the impossible. A Northampton cobbler sets out to evangelise

India ; does it seem a foolish and futile enterprise ? Yet to-day the ancient faiths of India are dead or dying. William Carey and his successors, empowered by the Holy Spirit, have been too strong for India. Just over a century ago Robert Morrison set sail for China ; it seemed a quixotic business. " Do you think," said the captain of the ship in which he sailed, " that you are going to convert China ? " " No," replied Morrison, " but I believe that God will." It was not Robert Morrison alone who was going to China, but Robert Morrison fortified by the Holy Ghost, and there is happening in China to-day what happened in the vast Roman Empire long ago. A young collier began to speak and preach down in a village in South Wales some few years ago. Did it look as if that young fellow would shake the land from end to end ? No suggestion could have looked more unlikely and absurd. But the impossible happened ; only, it was not Evan Roberts who accomplished that mighty miracle, but Evan Roberts *fortified* by the Holy Ghost.

Faith in the Holy Ghost is no matter of theory or speculation with me. I see the proofs of it in the miracles of grace accomplished through men in the course of the centuries ; I see men accomplishing the impossible ; I see them triumphing over the embattled forces of sin and hell. And as John Wesley said, there is but one explanation of it,—" it is the mighty power

of God." Moody one day heard a man say that the world had yet to see what God would do with and for and through and in and by the man who was fully and wholly consecrated to Him. Moody determined that he would be that man; he gave himself up to the sway and rule of the Spirit of God. You know the result. D. L. Moody, the uncultivated manager of a Chicago boot store, quickened religion in two continents. I look at the story of the Church; I read of the wondrous triumphs wrought through weak instruments; I recall how men have been lifted above fear and made strong to the pulling down of the strongholds of Sin and Satan, and I know that the omnipotent energies of God work in and through the consecrated man; I know that God, the personal, living God, not a mere influence or force, dwells in man; and so I say with conviction and certitude: I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Fortifier.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAITH

"I believe in the Holy Ghost"—that is a great faith and it ought to have great results in our lives. I can only, in a sentence, indicate them. (i) "I believe in the Holy Ghost," the Enlightener; therefore, in times of unrest and change like the present, let us be of good heart. We get troubled about the faith sometimes; we fear almost lest truth should be submerged by error. I am not urging a sort of *laissez*

faire attitude, but I do say that there is no need to fall into a panic. The issue of even the present controversy and unsettlement is bound to be a larger knowledge of the truth. We believe in the Holy Ghost; and it is the work of the Spirit to lead us into truth. Development is inevitable. Progress is certain. The mere fact that we believe in the Holy Ghost means that we do not believe that all truth is already revealed. Knowledge will grow from more to more; but let no one imagine that the course of the Church is going to lead her into error and falsity. We believe in the Holy Ghost, and that means that He will lead us into all the truth. (ii) "I believe in the Holy Ghost," the Fortifier. Therefore, even when difficulties confront us and our enemies seem too strong for us, let us be of good cheer. Believing in the Holy Ghost means believing in the presence and working of Almighty God; and who can believe in the presence and working of God, and give place to fear and despair? If God be for us who can be against us? I hear people talk about the arrest of the Church; I hear them forecast the time when the Church shall have ceased to be. But all this pessimistic talk does not daunt or discourage me. When I look forward, it is not a world without a Church, a world from which Christianity has been abolished, that I see; I see a world in which religion is supreme. I see a world in which

Christ is all in all. I see my Master exalted and lifted up and become very high. I see every knee bowing to Him, whether of things in heaven or things in earth, or things under the earth. It is not defeat I foresee for the Church, but victory and triumph and resistless power.

"Empires, temples, sceptres, thrones,
May they all for God be won;
And in every human heart,
Father, let Thy kingdom come."

It is no vain prayer. Its fulfilment is as sure as the rising of to-morrow's sun. Here is the certainty of it: "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

It is a great faith. All history proclaims it a reasonable faith; all history asserts the presence and working of the Spirit of God amongst men. And yet, to believe in the Spirit in the only real and effective way, we must know the power of the Spirit in our own life. The man who has been quickened, cleansed, empowered in his own soul—that is the man who believes in the Holy Ghost. And such an experience may be ours, if only we open our hearts to His coming. Have you received the Holy Ghost? Life and cleansing and power are in His gift. He will lift us into new and joyous levels of existence. A perpetual joy will be in our souls. We shall be among those who

Carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

VIII

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

"And gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."—EPHESIANS I, 22, 23.

"I believe . . . in the Holy Catholic Church."
—APOSTLES' CREED.

I have already called attention to the fact that belief in the Holy Ghost and belief in the Holy Catholic Church are closely and intimately associated together. The one belief is, indeed, dependent upon the other It is because we believe in the Holy Ghost that we are able also to believe in the Holy Catholic Church. Historically, we may say that it was on the first day of Pentecost that the Church came into active and vigorous existence. It existed in germ, no doubt, before. In the twelve who left all and followed Christ, in the one hundred and twenty believers gathered together in the upper room, we may see the nucleus of the Church, the raw material of the Church. But it was Pentecost that quickened and empowered it; Pentecost was the Church's birthday, and it is in virtue of the presence of the Holy Ghost that the Church has continued to live.

For the Church is a supernatural society, and lives a supernatural life. When it ceases to be supernatural it ceases to be a Church, and becomes a mere society or club. Only as the Church is informed by the Spirit does it become that august and majestic thing which Paul here describes: "the Body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Now, in addressing myself to the discussion of the Church, I am well aware that I am entering a region of fierce debate and bitter controversy. In a sense, every article of this ancient creed is the subject of controversy. There are those who challenge the existence of God; there are those who dispute the Divinity of our Lord; there are those who deny the personality and presence of the Holy Ghost. But those who make these denials are for the most part outside the Christian Church. They are men who disbelieve in revealed religion altogether. When, however, we come to discuss the subject of "the Church," we are entering upon what is a matter of angry debate amongst Christians themselves. Of all wars ever waged, the most bitter and disastrous are civil wars. "The Church" is an occasion of civil war amongst Christian folk; it stirs up internecine strife; it splits the Christian people up into antagonistic and hostile camps. Right away from the days of the Donatist controversy to these days of ours, it has been the fruitful cause

of division and conflict. Its disastrous effects are only too manifest; it has inflicted upon Christ's cause infinitely more damage than all the attacks of critics and sceptics from Celsus down to Robert Blatchford; it has weakened the efforts of Christian people and paralysed their energies. The strength that ought to have been employed in fighting the world the flesh and the devil, is frittered and wasted in mutual recrimination and strife. The swords that ought to be turned against a common enemy we turn against one another. Look at the Christian people of England at this time, rent and torn and divided as they are, suspicious of one another and oftentimes fiercely hostile to one another. Think of that miserable education controversy which has been, for the last six years, embittering and poisoning the very springs of our social and national life. The quarrel—to our shame be it said—is a quarrel amongst Christian people. If Christian people would only compose their differences, the quarrel could be settled in a week; but the quarrel drags its ugly length along, the interests of the child are sacrificed and the interests of religious instruction itself are jeopardised, all because Christian people cannot live together in peace and concord. This bitter strife, these fierce and incessant quarrels of ours—they give the devil his opportunity, but they must make the angels weep. "Tell Mr. Horne," said the

Bishop of London not very long ago, referring to some joint action he and Mr. Silvester Horne had taken for the moral welfare of the metropolis, and in which they had been brilliantly successful: "tell Mr. Horne we can always win when we are united." Yes, united we could always win. In every great fight for liberty and righteousness and truth and purity, we could always win. We are baffled and beaten because, instead of being united, we are split up into a number of warring sects. "*Divide et impera!*" was the cynical advice of the Roman statesman; "Divide and rule!" "Split up your opponents and so retain the supreme authority." Looking abroad over the religious condition of England, one is almost tempted to say that has been the Devil's policy. He has sown seeds of dissension amongst the Christian people and while they have been quarrelling, he has kept his power; he has split up our forces and beaten us in detail.

And when you begin to examine into the reasons for this disastrous internecine strife, you will find it centres and gathers round "the Church." That is the bone of contention. Most Christians agree together in their belief in God; they agree together in their belief in Jesus Christ and His redeeming work; they agree together in their belief in the Holy Spirit—you might say of them, indeed, in the Apostle's words that they have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." But they differ about "the Church,"

and this one difference seems to make them forget the great things in which they agree; their divergence in the matter of ecclesiastics seems to make them forget that they are one in religion, so that, instead of living in cordial union and fellowship with one another, they hold coldly aloof, they refuse communion, they deny one another's Christianity, and bring the whole cause of Christ to an "arrest."

In venturing therefore to speak about "the Church," I recognise that I am dealing with an explosive kind of topic. Insensibly almost one drifts into the region of partisanship and controversy, and in that region the heat generated is generally out of all proportion to the light given. Now in this sermon I have no wish to fan the fierce flames of controversy; I would fain hope that what I have to say may have precisely the opposite effect, and as far as we are concerned, beget within us kindlier feelings towards all those who, however they may differ ecclesiastically from us, yet love and serve the same Lord. It is the promotion of unity, and not the perpetuation of division, that I have at heart in what I am about to say. For, after all, unity is never going to be secured by banishing the question of the Church from our public speech; unity is only going to be gained by arriving at right views about the Church. It is difference of view that keeps us apart at present; it is only a true under-

standing of the Church that will ever bring us together. It is to the task of trying to understand what the Church is in the New Testament conception of it that I want now to address myself.

THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCHES

The first point to which I want to call attention is this, that in the New Testament the word "church" is used in at least two different senses; it is used to describe the local company of believers, as, for instance, when the Apostle speaks of the "church of God which is at Corinth," and in his letter to Philemon of "the church in thy house." It is also used in a far broader and more comprehensive sense as embracing practically all who love the Lord Jesus, wherever they meet or whatever tongue they speak. That is the use of the word, which is characteristic of the great Epistle to the Ephesians. When Paul talks about Christ being head of all things to the Church, when he talks about Christ loving the Church and giving Himself for it, it is not the Church at Ephesus he is thinking of simply, but that greater Church, that universal Church which embraces and includes the holy and the loving and the good everywhere. This double use of the term must be carefully noted. The little community of Christians at Philippi or Corinth or Ephesus constitute *a* Church, because they

enjoy the promised presence of Christ; but they do not constitute *the* Church. *The* Church is not confined to any one country or town; it is made up of the totality of believers everywhere. We believe that this community of ours, worshipping in this Richmond Hill Chapel, constitutes a real Church, a complete Church, dowered with all the powers and prerogatives Christ bestows upon His Church. But Richmond Hill is not *the* Church; *the* Church is a glorious and world-wide communion which includes men of every clime, and every tongue; and every colour; and every ecclesiastical name, who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Now it is not with the local Church, but with the Church universal that the article in the creed which we are to study together, specially deals. "I believe," it says, "in the Holy Catholic Church." It is to the question, therefore, of the Holy Catholic Church that I shall specially address myself. Two remarks only I will make upon the subject of the local and particular Church, and I stay to make these remarks only because they will help us in our understanding of what the Holy Catholic Church is.

1. The first remark I want to make has reference to the conditions of entrance into the Church. No one can read the New Testament without seeing that the condition of entrance into the church was *faith in the Lord Jesus*. It is true that baptism was observed as the

initiatory rite, but baptism was only the outward and visible sign of a faith already quickened. It was the *faith* that was the all-important and vital thing. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Or, to put it in a slightly different way, the crucial and decisive question is the one Jesus Himself addressed to Peter: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou *Me*?" Membership in Christ's Church is not a matter of the observance of this or that rite, it is a question of personal relationship to Christ, the Head of the Church. I know that some Churches seem to teach that baptism makes a man a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, but there is absolutely no warrant in Scripture for any such belief. Baptism is never regarded as bringing about the new life of faith and love; it is simply the sign that the new life has already begun. This personal relation to Christ is the essential thing. The condition of entrance into the Church is that first of all men should be "in Christ."

2. The second remark I wish to make has reference to Church order and government. I believe the Church is of Christ's own institution, but I am also persuaded that Christ laid down no fixed and rigid rules of Church order. I do not, for instance, believe that any method of Church government can claim for itself Divine right. It is abundantly clear, all competent historians

admit, that the method of the earliest Church was congregational. I do not, on that account, claim that Congregationalism is the one and only legitimate form of Church order. All I claim for it is that, at any rate, it has the sanction of the early Church, and it is the particular order which best accords with my own religious temperament. As a matter of fact, the New Testament records make it plain that, to some extent, the method adopted was decided by local circumstances. There is no suggestion of one stereotyped order of government which every Church had to observe. I say there is no suggestion of this in the New Testament. The New Testament reveals to us a diversity of operations. The Congregationalist finds Congregationalism there; the Presbyterian finds Presbyterianism; and the Episcopalian—though he has a much more difficult task—finds suggestions of Episcopalianism. When any man asserts exclusive rights for his own particular form of Church order, he is simply flying in the face of the teaching of the whole New Testament. It cannot, therefore be essential to the existence of a Church that it should observe a particular method of government, or possess a certain order of ministry. The utmost that can be said of any order is that it has advantages over others. But clearly, in face of the facts of the New Testament, it cannot be maintained that any particular order is

essential. For instance, it cannot be said that Episcopacy is essential. I remember, some years ago, a letter being addressed by the English Bench of Bishops to the various Nonconformist Churches with reference to the question of Reunion. And one condition of union which they laid down was the acceptance of the Historic Episcopate—the implication being that, in some way, it was essential to the very being of the Church. But that is an impossible contention in view of the facts which the New Testament reveals. The utmost that can be claimed for it is that it is of the *bene esse*—the *well* being; it cannot be claimed that it is of the *esse*, the *being* of the Church. Congregationalism, Presbyterianism, and possibly Episcopacy, (though not Episcopacy in the modern sense), are to be found in practice in New Testament churches. Possibly, local conditions and associations dictated the particular form adopted. But the variety proves that no ecclesiastical order is to be regarded as binding and necessary. Churches may follow either the one or the other, and still be true Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, leaving the individual and local Churches with these two remarks,—remarks whose pertinency will appear later,—I come to the consideration of this great article of faith: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

"I *believe* in the Holy Catholic Church." You will notice the creed puts faith in the Catholic Church very much on the same plane as belief in God. It is a matter of *faith* and not of knowledge. What we actually see is a multitude of disputing and competing sects. Which of these disputing and competing sects is to be greeted as the Catholic Church? Not any one of them. Not even those who deck themselves out with the title Catholic. The Church that acknowledges the Pope as its earthly head calls itself proudly Roman Catholic. It rules out of the Church of Christ all outside its own communion. "Let no man be accounted a Catholic who is not in agreement with the Roman Church," said Hildebrand, centuries ago; and that position Rome still proudly holds—though by so doing she unchurches half the Christians of the world. Then a certain school in the Established Church of our own land speaks of that Church as the Anglo-Catholic Church, and reckons all outside of the Greek Church and the Roman Church and the English Church to be outside the Catholic Church of Christ, though thereby they unchurch half the Christians of their own land. But the notions of "catholicity" that lie behind these exclusive claims of Anglicanism and Romanism are purely mechanical and external. Union with a certain visible organisation—that is their

test of Catholicity. But I turn to my New Testament, and I find that the point insisted upon is not union with any outward organisation, but union with Christ; not submission to this or that ecclesiastical rite, but faith and love toward the Lord Jesus.

And when I ask why union with these particular organisations, rather than with any other, is to be regarded as constituting a man a Catholic, I find the claim is based upon a supposed Apostolical succession preserved by means of an historical Episcopate. Now, as a matter of fact, this supposed Apostolical succession, preserved by an unbroken line of bishops, is a pure figment. It simply does not exist. But, quite apart from the historical evidence, it is attaching an importance to a certain form of Church order which, as I have striven to point out, the New Testament absolutely discountenances. The possession of an Episcopate cannot constitute a Church a Catholic Church, seeing that it is more than questionable whether we get in the New Testament episcopacy at all, and in the meantime it is absolutely certain that there were Churches that followed the Congregational or Presbyterian order, and which were reckoned as part and parcel of the great Church of Jesus Christ.

I turn for my notions of the Catholic church to the New Testament, and this is what I find. At first the Church was actually and visibly one.

It was confined practically to Jerusalem, and all the disciples constituted just one fellowship; but soon, as the Gospel spread, that external and visible unity was broken. Certainly, when the good news reached Antioch, and did its saving work amongst the Greeks, there were, as Dr. Hort says, *two ecclesiae*—two Churches—differing very considerably, too, in order and practice. The two very speedily multiplied, as Paul and Barnabas prospered in their missionary work. There grew up churches all the way from Antioch to Rome. In these various churches there were different methods of Church order; there were differing schools of thought. In the Apostolic age, says Bishop Westcott, we may trace the essential features of these divisions over which we grieve. And yet, in spite of variation and difference, Paul sees all these varied churches bound together in a holy fellowship, and constituting together that great Church which was the Body of Christ. The unity he saw and emphasised was not unity of order—that did not exist; not unity of organisation—that did not exist; not unity of theological belief—even that did not exist; the unity he saw and emphasised was the unity of *faith*. Whether Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, they were all one in Christ; they believed in Him; they loved Him; they followed Him. "Wherever Jesus may be," said Ignatius, "there is the Catholic Church."

That is, in a phrase, the New Testament view, the Pauline view, the Apostolic view. "Wherever Jesus may be, there is the Catholic Church." Deep differences divided the Jerusalem Christian from the Corinthian Christian. But Jesus was in Jerusalem and Jesus was also in Corinth; and so Paul sees Jerusalem and Corinth and every other Christian community blended together into one great harmonious whole—*the* Catholic Church, composed of all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, "their Lord and ours."

And that is the true Catholic Church to-day. Not the Roman Church! Nor the Anglican Church! That is to put too narrow an interpretation upon the term. The Catholic Church is a far bigger thing than Romanism or Anglicanism. "Wherever Jesus is, there is the Catholic Church." All who are in Christ are in that blessed and holy company. It is in vain that any narrow-hearted ecclesiastics try to ban and exclude others who follow not with them. Do you remember Savonarola's answer to the Bishop of Vasona, who pronounced sentence of excommunication upon him on the day of his execution? "I separate thee," said the Bishop, "from the Church militant and the Church triumphant." "No, never"; the martyr was heard protesting, "from the Church militant, but not from the Church triumphant; that is more than you can do."

They could separate him from the Church militant by the cruel stroke of death; but no excommunication they could pronounce could ever separate him from that holy and blessed and eternal Church, which is the true Body of Christ. And that is what we say. We may be excommunicate of certain ecclesiastical communions, but no ecclesiastical censures can separate us from the Catholic Church. All who love Christ have their place in it, and none can thrust them forth from it. If we are in union with the Head, none can deny us our place in the Body. And that is the Catholic Church in which I *believe*. I *see* strife and division and antagonism. To all outward appearance, the Church of Christ seems hopelessly rent and torn. But behind all the divisions and antagonisms I detect a real spiritual unity. And as I gaze at all these sects at war amongst themselves, I seem to behold them melt into a glorious and blessed fellowship. Behind these manifold and differing churches, I *believe* there is a Holy Catholic Church. Turn to your hymn book, and you will see what I mean. Men who belonged to different churches, and who were separated from one another by ecclesiastical party walls, meet in our hymn books; Roman Catholic, Anglican, Nonconformist, they jostle one another in its pages. When we want to sing the praises of Jesus, this is what we sing:

"Jesus, the very thought of thee,
With sweetness fills my breast."

and it is the monk, Bernard, that leads our song. When we want to offer a prayer for guidance we cry :

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on."

and it is Cardinal Newman that leads our song. When we want to sing of our duty to foreign lands and heathen people, this is the hymn we sing :

"From Greenland's icy mountains,
From India's coral strand,"

and it is the Anglican Bishop Heber who leads our song. And when we want to sing of the "sweet wonders of the Cross" we say :

"In the Cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;"

and it is actually the Unitarian, Sir John Bowring, who leads our song. There *is* a Catholic Church. Even the most exclusive Churches are constrained to acknowledge it. Isaac Watts never was allowed to preach in Westminster Abbey, but scarcely any great function takes place there but they sing Isaac Watts's hymn :

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come."

There *is* a Catholic Church. Behind all our divisions there is a great and blessed unity. Our hymn book declares it. We greet in its pages those from whom ecclesiastically we are hopelessly sundered ; we greet them as brothers ;

they are one with us "in Christ." And that glorious fellowship of loving souls, *is* the Catholic Church. It is not Roman, it is not Anglican, it is not Congregational, it is not Presbyterian, it is not Methodist, it is not Salvation Army. It is bigger and nobler than all of these. It consists of all those who love the Lord Jesus, whate'er their name or sign. Membership in *this* Church is the essential thing. "Outside the Church," so runs the old saying, "there is no salvation." It is perfectly true. Outside *this* Church there is no salvation. It is not true of the Roman Church, or of the Anglican Church, or of the Congregational Church, or of any other visible ecclesiastical body, but it is true of this Catholic Church, for all who love Christ are in it, and if anyone is not in it, it is because he does not love Christ. And outside Christ there is no Salvation. So let us believe in the Catholic Church; it is hard to believe in it sometimes; nevertheless let us believe that behind all our disputes and bickerings there is a real and vital unity. Let us believe that, though there be many folds, Christ has His own flock; and let us be ready to greet every man who loves the Lord as our brother. And, above everything else, let us prove our own hearts with that searching question, "Lovest thou Me," that we may be sure we belong to that Catholic Church outside which there is no salvation.

THE HOLY CHURCH

I have left myself but little space to speak about that other word in this article of faith —"I believe in the *Holy* Catholic Church." This is just as difficult to believe in as the former. If it is hard to believe in the Catholic Church in face of the Church's divisions, it is equally hard to believe in the Church's Holiness in view of its obvious and patent imperfections. In what sense can the Church be called "holy"? To begin with, it is ***holy in its ideal and witness.*** "Be ye perfect," said our Lord, "as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." "Like as he which called you is holy," said the Apostle, "be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." It is not a mere conventional goodness the Church demands of men. It demands holiness of them. It sets before them ever the "mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The failures and defeats of men do not make it lower its ideals. It calls men to be saints with the assurance that the call can be obeyed. And not only is the Church holy in ideal and witness, but in some measure it ***creates the holiness to which it calls.*** I do not say the world ever sees a *perfect* man, but the Church is constantly giving the world glimpses of that *holiness* to which it bears witness. It is a holy Church because again and again we see in it the holy man—the saint. I think of them, the saints of the Church—not saints of the cloister merely, like Aquinas and A Kempis,—

but saints of the open air like Francis, and saints of the mission field like Xavier and Livingstone, and saints of the court like Mary Godolphin, and saints of the legislature like Shaftesbury and Gladstone, and saints of the market and the exchange like Samuel Morley and Francis Crossley, and saints of philanthropy like John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, and all that vast army of holy and humble men of heart, from those who were "washed and sanctified and justified" in Corinth long ago, down to those who in the path of quiet, obscure, but faithful duty, walk with God to-day. And when I think of these holy men whom the Church has given to this world, I can say "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." And the Church is *holy in her destiny*. The time is coming when she shall be freed from the stains that mar her beauty in the eyes of the world. I look forward to the Church when her warfare is accomplished. It is a vision of a perfectly holy Church I see, for Christ will present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. And when I think of these things I feel the framers of this old creed were right. This is the word that expresses the inmost character of the Church. It is "holy." "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

What a great faith it is! To begin with, what inspiration there is in it! The Holy

Catholic Church! When I think of it I am lifted out of all narrow and petty parochialism. I feel the throb and thrill of a mighty life. I love this Congregational Church of ours. I glory in its history! I thank God for its great saints and heroes—Robinson and Howe and Owen, and John Milton, and Oliver Cromwell, and Isaac Watts, and Philip Doddridge, and John Howard and David Livingstone, and Angell James, and Dr. Dale! But I belong to a mightier Church than the Congregational. I feel the appeal of still nobler inspirations. I feel the sweep of a still vaster life. I believe in the Holy Catholic Church! "I am part," says Tennyson, "of all that I have met," and that is how I feel with regard to the great Catholic Church of Christ. I am part of it. It is part of me. All the saints and heroes of its history belong to me. All its inspirations and mighty incentives are mine. You and I do not belong to some narrow sectarianism. We believe in and belong to the Holy Catholic Church. We are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God!

And what obligations it imposes! "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," and the holy Church demands holy men. We are called to be "saints," and it is by the answer our lives make to that call, that our membership in the Church will be tested. "By their fruits ye shall know them." And on that note and with that question I will close—what about this

mark of holiness ? " Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." It is in vain we profess our belief in the Holy Church, if we ourselves live unholy lives. There is no place at the marriage supper for the man who has not the wedding garment. Have we got the mark of " holiness " ? Are we amongst those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus ? Does our life show that we believe in the Holy Catholic Church ? Here is a prayer for every one of us : " Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow ; create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me " ; for without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

" I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." Believe in it and pray for it ! Yes, let your prayers rise up like a fountain night and day on its behalf. For through this holy church Christ's Kingdom is to come and God's will is to be done. Pray that discord may abate, and division may disappear. Pray that errors and falsities may all be purged away. Pray, as the prayer for the Church Militant puts it, " that the universal Church may be inspired with the spirit of truth, unity and concord ; and that all who do confess God's Holy Name may agree in the truth of His Holy Word, and live together in unity and godly love." The day of the Church's sanctification will be the day of our Lord's triumph.

IX

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

"So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."—EPHESIANS ii. 19.

"I believe in . . . the Communion of Saints."—APOSTLES' CREED.

Belief in the communion of saints is most intimately and vitally connected with belief in the "Holy Catholic Church." Indeed, it may be said that the one belief is simply the necessary consequence and corollary of the other. If there is no such thing as a Holy Catholic Church; if there is no great spiritual body in which all who are genuine and sincere Christians find their place; if the divisions and schisms we see all about us represent the ultimate and final fact; then it is idle to talk about the "Communion of Saints." But if behind all these divisions and schisms there is a real and glorious unity of life; if there *is* a Holy Catholic Church which embraces all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter by what denominational name they may be called, then the Communion of Saints is a great and blessed reality. Belief in the Holy Catholic Church

and in the Communion of Saints are indeed not two separate and distinct beliefs. They are the same belief looked at from two different standpoints. They do not constitute two truths, they are rather different sides of the same truth, and as such, they are often, by writers on the Creed, as, for instance, Bishop Westcott, taken together. But I propose to devote a whole sermon to the "communion of saints," partly because I love the idea for which the phrase stands, and partly also because it will enable me to say a few words about the unity of Christ's Church which may help to clarify our minds and comfort our hearts, which the exigencies of time compelled me to omit from the preceding sermon.

I am not going to trouble you with the history of this particular phrase in the Creed; it is not to be found in the earliest and most primitive forms of it; it is a Western addition of the fifth century. Nor am I going to trouble you with the various interpretations put upon it in various centuries, and by various ecclesiastical parties in the Christian Church. What I am concerned about is the meaning it possesses to-day, and the comfort and inspiration it can impart to us to-day.

WHO ARE THE SAINTS

Before, however, we are competent to discuss the truth of this article or to appreciate its

inspiration, we must know exactly what it means. What does the "Communion of Saints" mean? That raises another question. Who are the "saints" referred to? In our current and every day speech, when we talk of the "saints" we mean those members of the Christian Church who, having fought the good fight and kept the faith, now share in the glory and blessedness of the Lord; that part of the Holy Church—by far the greater part—whose warfare is accomplished, the multitude which no man can number, arrayed in white robes, and with palms in their hands. When we speak of the "saints" we instinctively think of Heaven and the Church Triumphant. That is the conception of the "saints" upon which Archbishop Maclagan's familiar hymn is based:

"The saints of God, their conflict past,
And life's long battle won at last;
No more they need the shield or sword,
They cast them down before their Lord.
O happy Saints, for ever blest,
At Jesus' feet how safe your rest."

Now, these glorified saints are undoubtedly included in the term. Indeed, it was the fact of communion with those who have passed from earth but who live unto God that was, at one time, the dominant idea suggested by this phrase, "the Communion of Saints." But the merest glance at the New Testament will be sufficient to show that as the Apostles used it, the term

"saint" was by no means confined to the glorified. To the Apostle Paul, for instance, every Christian was a saint. Turn to the inscriptions of his letters. This is the kind of address we find: "Paul and Timothy to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." "Paul, an Apostle of Christ Jesus, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossæ." "Paul, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." It is quite obvious the references here are to living men and women, the men and women who formed the membership of these various churches. These were Paul's "saints." And notice further, that he does not confine the term to a select few in each Church, conspicuous for their special piety. The people whom Paul addresses as "saints," we soon discover, were very far from being perfect people. They were, indeed, full of faults and imperfections and failings. Think of the people at Corinth with their quarrellings and excesses and sensualities! And yet Paul thinks and speaks of them as "saints"! It is not simply that in these faulty and imperfect Christians he sees the promise of the glorified saint, just as the naturalist may see the giant oak in the tiny acorn! Faults and all, these Christians *were* "saints," in this sense, that they were consecrated to God, and had given them-

selves to Christ. For that is the New Testament meaning of the word "saint"; it means one dedicated, set apart, to the will of God. And, spite of all their shortcomings and sins, these early Christians had given themselves to Christ; the deepest thing in them was the love they bore to Christ; the life they lived, they lived in the faith of Christ. And everyone of whom that can be said, according to the Apostle's teaching, is a "saint." That is to say, the word "saint" means the sincere and genuine Christian. Every man who lives for Christ, and in whom Christ lives, is a "saint" in the New Testament sense of the term. And what this article of the creed asserts is that between all "saints" in this sense, that is to say, between all who really love Jesus, between all genuine Christians, there is a holy and blessed communion, a gracious and beautiful fellowship, a common life. Just as there was a constant and holy communion between God and Jesus in the days of the flesh, so that our Lord could speak of Himself and the Father as one; just as there is between the Christian and Christ such a close and vital fellowship that he can say with Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" so, between Christian people there is such an intimate relationship that they become members one of another; they are no longer strangers to one another, but fellow-citizens and of the household

of God. That is the great truth which this article on the " communion of saints " asserts. In the meantime, however, all the facts of life seem to controvert and deny the assertion. For what we actually see is not communion but division, not fellowship but exclusiveness, not unity but schism. The holy Church is split up into a number of wrangling and contending sects, and the members of these various sects decline to hold fellowship with one another, deny the validity of one another's sacraments and ministries, and denounce those who differ from them as outside Christian communion. In view of the chasms of division that separate the Orthodox Greek Church from the Roman, and the Roman from the Anglican, and the Anglican from the Free, what reality is there in the " Communion of Saints " ? Seeing that all these various Churches hold coldly aloof from each other ; that there is no kindly Christian intercourse between them ; that they treat each other as foes rather than as friends ; how is it possible to believe in this particular article of the creed ? I ask again, looking at the ecclesiastical conditions of our time, what reality is there in the " Communion of Saints " ?

THE NATURE OF THE COMMUNION

All this raises another question,—what kind of a " Communion of Saints " does the New Testament contemplate ? I think no

one can read the Gospels without feeling that our Lord looked for unity to prevail amongst His followers. In His last great prayer He prayed that "they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be in us." Upon the unity of His followers the faith of the world, in some measure, depends. I need not labour the point. About Christ's desire for unity amongst His people there can be no measure of doubt. But when we begin to ask what kind of a unity it was that Christ contemplated, differences at once arise.

There are some who assume that the unity Christ desired was a mechanical and external unity; that it was unity of organisation. And so we get the Roman and Anglican ideas of Corporate Reunion, with their complementary conceptions of what the sin of "schism" is. The Roman Church, for instance, claiming to be *the* true Church of Jesus Christ, declares that Christ's prayer will never be fulfilled until we all return to her fold; that, so long as we remain outside, we are guilty of the sin of schism and are shut out of the communion of the saints. Numbers of Anglicans in our own country take up very much the same kind of attitude towards the Free Churches. They declare that by our very existence we break up the unity of the Church of Christ and make impossible the realisation of Christ's desire. Now, I do not want to be misunderstood. I do not disparage

the idea of Corporate Unity. You cannot make a breach even in the outward unity of the Church, without, to some extent, impairing its efficiency. Splits are never helpful to the cause of religion. No one can think of the state of England to-day, with our numbers of churches competing with one another, sometimes antagonising one another, without realising that our divisions have made us weak and ineffective. We should be infinitely better able to cope with the indifference and irreligion of our land, if all who professed and called themselves Christians loved one another with a pure heart fervently. And so my heart thrills with sympathetic emotion, when I read a noble appeal for Reunion such as that which the Dean of Westminster addressed to the assembled Bishops of the recent Pan-Anglican Congress. But at the moment, it is not the expediency of Corporate Union that I am discussing. The question we have to settle first is this,—was Christ's notion of unity a mechanical and external unity such as the Romanists and most Anglicans assume it to be? Was that what Christ meant by "being One," that we should all be embraced in the same ecclesiastical organisation? To answer that question we must refer not to Church Fathers, but to the teaching of Christ Himself. And I venture to assert that no one can read Christ's words, and believe it was external unity of organisation

He had in mind. The one verse that seemed to give direct support to such a view in the Authorised Version is altered in the Revised. "There shall be one *fold*, one Shepherd," says the Authorised Version. "There shall one *flock*, one Shepherd," says the Revised. That is to say, the unity is found, not in the fact that the sheep are all gathered within the same four walls, but that they are all under the loving care of the one Good Shepherd.

It is the same inward and spiritual idea of unity that is conveyed by those great and solemn verses in the intercessory prayer. Christians are to be made one, not by any external bond, but by a common spiritual relationship to Christ. "I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one." You notice, they are to be perfected into one, their unity is to be realised, by the presence of Christ in them. That is to say, the unity is not one of organisation but one of spirit and life.

And this view is confirmed by the story of Christ's treatment of that unknown believer, who cast out devils in His name. The disciples forbade him and denounced him, because he did not belong to their little company. But Jesus would have none of it. He recognised the man as one of His real disciples. It was "in His name" he did his beneficent work. And that meant that he belonged to Jesus, although he was not a member of the Apostolic band.

Christ's test of fellowship was not mechanical and external, but inward and spiritual. The basis of communion was not organisation, but faith and life.

And this, again, accords with the unanimous witness of the Apostles. Take just two examples. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light," says St. John, "we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." "We have fellowship one with another." How? By belonging to the same Church organisation? No, but by "walking in the light"; that is, by obeying the truth of Christ, and experiencing the forgiving love of Christ. John finds the basis of fellowship not in any external bond, but in a common experience of grace and a common life of obedience.

"We, who are many," says St. Paul, "are one bread, one body, for we all partake of the one bread." He has been speaking of the bread at the Lord's Table. The taking of that bread, he says, is "a communion of the body of Christ." That is to say, spiritually we receive into our souls the very life of Christ, when we eat that bread in faith. And that is what makes us all *one body*, not that we belong to the same visible organisation, but that we all "eat of the same bread," that we all participate in the same Divine life. The unanimous testimony, therefore, of the New Testament

is that communion depends not upon unity of organisation, but upon a common life and a common love. It is not union with a certain visible Church, but *union with Christ* that makes fellowship possible. All who eat of the same bread make up one great and glorious Body.

Christ is the great Reconciler. Christ is the great Unifier. In Christ, Jew and Gentile hold fellowship together. The chasm that divided the one from the other seemed almost impassable. There were deep and seemingly irreconcilable differences between them. Those differences did not vanish even when Jew and Gentile both turned Christian ; they continued to subsist, as any reader of the New Testament may discover for himself. It is no exaggeration to say that there was, in the early days of Christianity, a Jewish Church and a Gentile Church. And yet " in Christ " the differences were solved, and Jew and Gentile greeted one another as brethren. " So then," cries the Apostle, exulting in the effects of the reconciling work of Christ, " ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." A common faith in Christ brought Jew and Gentile into happy communion with each other. And to this day Christ, and not the Church, is the basis of fellowship and the means of communion. All who love Him are bound to love one another. They

speak the same tongue, they belong to the same household, they recognise one another as kindred spirits. And it is just because the real ground of communion is Christ, that the real basis of fellowship is a common faith and a common love, that, in spite of the sects and factions—rival sects and warring factions—into which the Church of Christ is split, I can repeat with sincerity and confidence this great article of the Creed, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." It may be that, in the years to come, we shall see a movement towards closer organic Union. Such a movement is already in progress in Australia and in Canada. And it must come, one would think, in England too. Our rivalries and animosities are not to last for ever. As we understand Christ better, we are bound to draw more closely together. But in the meantime with all our separate sects, with all our rival and competing Churches, I believe in the real unity of all Christ's people, I believe in the "Communion of Saints."

THE COMMUNION—A FACT

I believe in it *as a fact*. We build our ecclesiastical party walls strong and high, but no party walls, however high, can keep kindred spirits apart. There is a freemasonry of Christian souls. Instinctively and naturally they recognise one another. "The Lord knoweth them that are His," says the old Book.

And the Lord's people also recognise one another. And no power on earth can keep them apart. Catholic bans Protestant; Protestant denounces Catholic; but "in Christ" Protestant and Catholic recognise one another as brethren. If I may refer once again to our hymn book, it is to repeat that, as Bishop Westcott says, we have a concrete illustration of the Communion of Saints. Catholic and Protestant, Trinitarian and Unitarian, Sacramentarian and Puritan, all meet in the pages of this hymn book. I know all about the differences—the deep and vital differences—that sunder Catholic from Protestant, Trinitarian from Unitarian, Sacramentarian from Puritan. And yet, when I find Cardinal Newman, Sir John Bowring, Bishop Ken, Father Faber and Isaac Watts side by side in the pages of this book; when I find that Puritan though I be I can clasp hands with the Roman Cardinal and the Anglican Bishop and the Unitarian *littérateur*, I know that despite all differences and divisions there is a common life, a blessed communion of saints. I think of the books upon my shelves, the great masters to whom I owe so much. I heard Dr. Alexander Whyte, of Edinburgh, speak recently about the great Puritans John Owen and Thomas Goodwin. He bade us read them; he told us of his own debt to them. Thomas Goodwin and John Owen, and Richard Baxter and Matthew Henry, they are all upon my shelves.

But not they alone! Side by side with the Puritans stand the works of great Catholics and great Anglicans. It is not with the Puritans alone I hold fellowship; I hold fellowship also with those other Christians between whom and the Puritans there seemed to be a great gulf fixed. I hold fellowship with Augustine, and pour out my soul in the words of his Confessions. I hold fellowship with A Kempis, while he teaches me the Imitatio Christi. I hold fellowship with William Law while he addresses to me his Serious Call, and with Jeremy Taylor while he discourses about Holy Living and Dying. I hold fellowship with Newman and with Robertson as I read their sermons—two men sundered far from each other, and both of them ecclesiastically separated from me. In my study every day of my life I enjoy the "Communion of Saints." Across the centuries, and across the highest ecclesiastical party walls, we clasp hands and meet. I believe in the "communion of saints." Nothing can hinder or destroy that holy fellowship. In our blindness and wickedness we refuse outward and visible communion. We do not worship together. We do not sit down at the Lord's Table together. But in spite of it all our spirits meet. Catholic, Anglican, and Puritan, we are one in Christ. We are not strangers, we are fellow citizens, and all of us of the household of God. Let us believe in this communion

and cultivate it. Let us do what we can to promote actual and visible fellowship. But, even as it is, in the midst of our present distress, let us thank God that no narrow ecclesiasticism can hinder the real communion of souls. In Christ we clasp hands with every other Christian, no matter what his denominational name. We can greet one another as brethren, and say:

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above."

THE COMMUNION—A POWER

And I believe in the Communion of Saints, not only as a fact but also as an *inspiration and power*. The Christian life is not a detached and isolated life; it is a *social* life. It is meant to be lived in fellowship with other men and women of the like faith. That is why the Apostle bids us "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together." There is inspiration, there is refreshing, there is encouragement, in fellowship. On the local and limited scale we are enjoying the "communion of saints" when we meet together for worship like this; we enjoy it in still deeper and more intimate fashion when we meet around the Table of the Lord. Who is there of us who has not experienced something of the stimulus that comes from the "Communion of the Saints"?

"Iron sharpeneth iron," says the wise man, "so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." And again and again, when we have met with our fellow believers in the services of the Church, we have had our love quickened, our faith confirmed, our strength renewed. That has been my own experience again and again. There come times to all of us when our hands hang down and our knees are feeble and our hearts are faint. But again and again, as I have stood at the Table, and have looked across at the men and women sitting in the pews, and have recalled the fact that their very presence there was the sign and proof that they loved the same Lord as I did, and had pledged themselves to the same Lord as I had, and were engaged in the same service as I was; the mere realisation that I was one of a great band of believers, that I was not solitary but surrounded by a multitude of friends, sympathisers, brethren; I say the realisation of this has again and again lifted me up out of my depression and discouragements and filled me with hope and courage. It was the inspiration given by the "Communion of Saints." There is something in feeling that we belong to a great host, a mighty body. Congregationalists from all parts of the world forgathered in Edinburgh recently. It did us all good to meet; it must have been specially helpful to those who came to us from places like Sweden, and even Canada,

where Congregationalism leads a comparatively feeble existence. They realised, after all, that Congregationalism was not a weak thing—that it was a great and mighty force. They felt the throb and heave of a vast and potent life. And they will go back to their spheres all the stronger and happier for a taste of the world-wide Congregational fellowship. But as Christians we enjoy a still vaster communion. We belong to that august and glorious Body which is composed of all who, in every place, love the Lord Jesus Christ. We may feel feeble and insignificant in ourselves, but we belong to that vast and numberless host who, in every land, call Christ Lord. The pulse of that mighty life beats in our veins. They belong to us ; we belong to them.

> "All one body we—
> One in hope, in doctrine
> One in charity."

There is uplifting in the very thought. There is inspiration in the mere remembrance of the "Communion of Saints."

And I would remind you that the communion is not limited to the saints who still abide on earth. The Church of Christ on earth and in heaven is one and indivisible. It is all one blessed and glorious Body. And in Christ we touch hands with a far larger company than any the eye can see. We touch hands with the blessed dead of all

the centuries. For though we speak of them as dead, they are alive unto God, and unto us as well. We enter into communion with the apostles, prophets, saints and martyrs of all the buried years. When we come up in faith to a service like this, we come, not only to the men and women we can see about us, we come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. As Newman says in his noble sermon :

"When we praise God in worship like this, we praise Him with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven. When we read the Psalms, we join the vast company of those who for thousands of years past have sustained themselves with the same words in their pilgrimage heavenward. When we pray, we are not solitary, but others 'are gathered together' with us 'in Christ's Name,' though we see them not, with Christ in the midst of them. And when we are called to battle for the Lord, what are we who are seen, but mere outposts, the advanced guard of a mighty host, ourselves few in number and despicable, but bold beyond our numbers, because supported by chariots of fire and horses of fire round about the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, under which we stand ? "

And to realise that we are members of this vast and resistless host, to enter into communion with the saints, is to be lifted up above all doubts and fears. It is to be inspired to courage and devotion and heroism ourselves.

" Seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," says the writer to the Hebrews, " let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." There is inspiration to fidelity and stedfastness in the thought of those spiritual presences with whom we are one " in Christ." I read the other day in *The Nation* the story of a business man, the inheritor of an honoured name and honourable business traditions, who had a temptation put in his way to abandon the old methods of his firm, and join a great trust that cared more for its dividends than the welfare of its workmen. There was money in it, and the man was sorely tempted. But on the night in which the decision was to be taken, he fell into a reverie in front of his fire, and he seemed to behold his old father looking at him, with such concern in his eyes ; and at the sight of his father's face the temptation lost its power ; he must act as his father's son. And so the great cloud of witnesses watch us. We are " in communion " with them. Our own dear ones, sainted leaders whom we ourselves have known, the great and good of all the centuries, we are still in fellowship with them. And what inspiration their fellowship supplies ! Who can be base who holds communion with a holy mother ? Who can be craven who holds communion with a sainted father ? Who can be selfish who holds

fellowship with the loving John? Who can be idle and indifferent who holds fellowship with the consecrated Paul? Who can turn coward who keeps company with confessors, saints and martyrs? There is inspiration and succour in communion. "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

"The Communion of Saints"; it is a blessed means of grace! Let us cultivate it! Let us make the most and the best of it! Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together! Let us cultivate the fellowship of our own Church, but let us never forget that we are one with all who love the Lord Jesus by whatever name they are called. Let us never forget that we are members of that great body that includes all the hosts of the redeemed in heaven. Think of that mighty fellowship of which we are members. "We are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." There is uplift, inspiration, strength in the remembrance. If we cultivate the "Communion of the Saints," we ourselves shall be followers of those who now inherit the promises and shall come at last to that fair place where

> "Saints are clothed in spotless white
> And evening's shadows never fall;
> Where God, Eternal Light of Light,
> Is Lord of all."

X

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

"Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."—ACTS v. 31.

"I believe . . . in the forgiveness of sins."—APOSTLES' CREED.

The clause in the Creed which we are now to study together brings us to the very heart and core of the Christian Gospel. The Christian Gospel is *par excellence* a Gospel of redemption; its good news to the world centres in the proclamation of the "forgiveness of sins." It was to make this forgiveness possible that Jesus took flesh and died. Some scholars and teachers amongst us take a delight in thinking that the Son of God would have become incarnate even though sin had never entered our world. He would have come, they say, to complete and crown this human nature of ours. That may or may not be so; no one can tell. What we *do* know is that the mode and method of Christ's coming were conditioned by human sin. It was to deal with that sin He came; He did not come to enlighten an ignorant world, He came

to redeem a ruined world; He did not come to crown an imperfect humanity, He came to save a sinful and lost humanity. It is profitless to ask what would have happened if there never had been any sin. The actual Incarnation we know took place in view of human sin, was necessitated by human sin. Christ came into the world to deal with sin, to bring to men the forgiveness of sin. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. And the supreme boon the Christian Gospel offers to men is forgiveness; not illumination or enlightenment, as some in these days seem inclined to think, but the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is not a superior philosopher; He is a Redeemer.

THE GOSPEL A GOSPEL OF FORGIVENESS

In saying this, I am emphasising the most elementary of truths. The fact that our Gospel is primarily and essentially a Gospel of forgiveness is written large across the face of our sacred records. I will not for the moment refer to the Old Testament. Let us confine ourselves to the distinctively Christian writings of the New Testament. From first to last, redemption is their theme, and forgiveness their great announcement. When the birth of Jesus was announced, this was the aspect of His mission which the angel emphasised: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His

people from their sins." When our Lord Himself began His ministry, He declared it was to be a ministry of redemption. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me," He said, "because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And the redemption and release He had in mind were not redemption and release from the tyranny of Rome, but redemption and release from the bitter bondage of sin. And true to that programme of His Mission our Lord preached forgiveness; He preached it in the parable of the two debtors; He preached it in the exquisite story of the Prodigal Son. And He not only preached it; he exercised it and practised it. The Son of Man had authority on earth to forgive sins, and to many a burdened soul He brought the assurance of God's forgiving love. He set them free from the crushing burden of guilt and shame. He said to the young paralytic who had been let down through the roof: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." He said to the woman who, braving the scorn and loathing on the faces of the guests, had ventured into Simon's house, and was sobbing out her penitence and shame at his feet: "Thy sins are forgiven: go in peace." He said to the woman who, with her shame fresh upon her, had been

dragged into His presence by brutal and unfeeling Pharisees: "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more." And when He died, it was for sin He died; He gave His life a ransom for many; He was the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. And when He rose again, and gave His disciples their marching orders, it was to preach forgiveness that He sent them forth. In His name they were to preach repentance and remission of sins unto all the nations. And that is exactly what the Apostles did. They carried to the world the good news of forgiveness. Peter in Jerusalem declared, in the words of my text, that God had exalted Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. Paul declared to the Ephesians that, in Christ, they had their redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of their sins. There is no need to multiply illustrations. The fact is obvious and unmistakable. The Gospel of Christ Crucified is a Gospel for a world of sin, and its good news centres in its proclamation of the forgiving grace of God.

And this Gospel of forgiveness meets the world's deepest need. The bottom evil of the world is not poverty, nor ignorance, but sin. What it suffers from is not an unenlightened mind, but an uneasy conscience and a polluted soul. And nothing meets its case like the proclamation of forgiveness. You remember

the story of Luther's agonies in the monastery at Erfurt ; his burdened and timid conscience gave him no rest nor peace ; he could not eat, he could not sleep, he could find no joy even in his devotions. "O, my sin, my sin!" he used to sob in his anguish. His misery and despair issued in an illness that brought him to the very brink of death. One day, as he lay, weak and spent and despairing, an old monk entered his cell to try and comfort him. Luther told him of his sorrows and fears and despairs. And what did the old monk say in reply? He repeated to the tortured and despairing Luther this article of the Creed: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." And somehow or other the mere repetition of the words brought consolation to Luther's heart. "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," he repeated softly to himself as he lay on his bed. "Ah!" said the old monk to him, "you must believe not only in the forgiveness of David's sin and Peter's sin ; it is God's command that we believe our own sins are forgiven us. The testimony of the Holy Ghost in thy heart is this: '*Thy* sins are forgiven thee.'" That was exactly the medicine Luther's sick soul needed. His despairs and fears all vanished and fled away in face of the proclamation of this Gospel of the "forgiveness of sins." And though all men do not pass through the same agonising experiences that Luther did,

it nevertheless remains true that no other Gospel but this meets our need. There may be many things amiss with us, but there comes to every one a time when he recognises that what is most amiss is that he is amiss with God. Sin has disturbed and broken the filial relationship that ought to obtain between man and God. And no man will ever be right, until he is right with God. And he will never be right with God, till his sin is removed and taken clean away. It is forgiveness the world wants most.

Dr. Van Dyke published a book some years ago entitled, "The Gospel for an Age of Doubt." He followed it with another entitled, "The Gospel for a World of Sin." The contrast in the titles is suggestive: "An *Age* of Doubt," "A *World* of Sin." It is well to have a Gospel for an Age of Doubt; it is well to have a message for the critical, sceptical temper of our own day. But the appeal of such a message is only sectional and temporary; it is only a Gospel *for an age*. If you want a Gospel *for a world*, you must address yourselves not to doubt but to sin; you must direct your message not to the bewildered brain, but to the burdened and broken heart. Such a message will be a permanent and universal Gospel—for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And the gospel for the world of sin is this, that God has exalted Christ to be a Prince

and a Saviour to give repentance to all men, and the remission of their sins.

And not only does this Gospel of Forgiveness meet the world's sorest need, but *it deals effectively with it.* I mean that forgiveness is not simply a promise; in the case of thousands and tens of thousands it is an actual and realised blessing. Men do, in very truth, receive from Christ the remission of their sins. Like Paul, they declare that Christ sets them free from the law of sin and death. Like Bunyan's pilgrim, when they come to Christ they are verily released from the crushing burden of their sins, and it is loosed from their shoulders and rolls into the sepulchre into which it falls, and they never see it more. Forgiveness is not a fancy, it is a fact. We have the experience of countless multitudes who know themselves forgiven, who rejoice in the conscious possession of the love and favour of God, to warrant and justify us in our faith when we say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

And yet what a tremendous faith it is! "Nothing, superficially, seems simpler or easier than forgiveness," says Bishop Westcott; "nothing, if we look deeply, is more mysterious or more difficult." "To reason," he adds, "the great mystery of the future is not punishment but forgiveness." No! nothing is more difficult than forgiveness! Indeed the difficulties connected with it to many seem so

enormous, that any real forgiveness becomes impossible.

DIFFICULTIES CONNECTED WITH FORGIVENESS

And those difficulties are more keenly felt to-day than, perhaps, they ever were before. The scientific conception of the reign of law has been making its way silently and imperceptibly, but none the less surely, for the past half-century, until, by this, it has become an axiom in all our thinking. And with this belief in the reign of rigid law we have come to believe that "evil once done is *done*, and no change of mind or mode of life in the guilty one can wipe out the effects of his transgression." The broken law will exact its penalty to the uttermost farthing. There is no such thing as the blotting out of transgressions. A man commits a sin, and that sin propagates and perpetuates itself. He cannot recall it; he cannot annul it. You fling a stone into a pool, and its impact upon the face of the water creates a series of ripples, each one wider than the previous one, the last of which will, perhaps, break on the very edge of the pool. And so the effects of sin may spread themselves to the bounds of earth and to the limits of time. On a man's own body and soul, and on other people's bodies and souls, sin leaves its baleful mark for ever. "The wages of sin is death," that is the rigid and remorseless law under which we live.

Science says so, and great writers like Ibsen and Thomas Hardy preach the same stern and despairing message. And so people are almost ceasing to believe in the possibility of the forgiveness of sins or, at any rate, they are so impoverishing the idea of forgiveness as to make it but the pale shade of that rich and full and free forgiveness of which the Gospel speaks. Now it is to the difficulties in the way of believing in the forgiveness of sins, caused by the dominance of this idea of the reign of law, that I want to address myself. Can God forgive sin, or has the new conception of the uniformity of the universe made it impossible for thinking and intelligent men to believe any longer in the forgiveness of sins? I am persuaded that, though there may be mysteries in the pardoning grace of God which we cannot fathom, the intellectual difficulties connected with forgiveness will, to a large extent, disappear on closer examination, so that with a reasoned and intelligent faith we may still gladly and gratefully say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

THE RESTORATION OF LOVE

Now, what is the difficulty in the way of a belief in forgiveness? In a word, it is the conviction that rigid and immutable law reigns in the universe, and that every broken law will exact its penalty. Law knows no mercy, and

therefore to talk of forgiveness in a world of law is to talk poetry. I agree; if there is nothing but law in the world then there is no such thing as forgiveness. But we are not in a world of rigid and soulless law—we are in a world ruled and governed by a living God. The fact is, that so long as we only talk of abstract law, we are not, as Dr. Denney says, dealing with *sin* at all. For sin can only be defined in one way, and that is by its relation to God. To use the word *sin* of an offence against any one but God is an abuse of terms. When we sin, it is not simply our own nature that we violate, it is not some abstract law we break—we resist and thwart and disobey the will of the Personal and Living God. "Against Thee," wrote the Psalmist, and he went to the root of the matter, "against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." The recognition of this simple fact that sin is an offence against a personal and living God, with whom we can hold personal and direct relations, disposes at once of any *a priori* objection to the possibility of forgiveness. If we have a Heavenly Father, and sin is sin against Him, to quote Dr. Denney once again, then forgiveness must be possible. For forgiveness in such case will consist essentially in this—*the resumption of the old relations of friendship and love.* And that leads me to make this remark, that while in part the difficulty about forgiveness has arisen from the dominance of

the idea of impersonal law, it has arisen in part also from the identification of forgiveness with the remission of penalty. But remission of penalty is by no means the whole of forgiveness ; it is not the chief thing in forgiveness ; it is not necessarily a part of forgiveness at all. As between persons, the chief thing, the essential thing in forgiveness, is the restoration of love. Take an illustration from every day life. Here is a son, let us say, who, like the younger son in the parable, breaks through the loving restraints of home, wanders into the far country and there wastes his substance in riotous living. He causes sorrow and heart-break almost to his parents ; he brings shame and impoverishment and disease upon himself ; but something happens that induces him to return home and throw himself upon the mercy of the parents whom he has so cruelly wronged. And when he comes—in his shame and wretchedness—his father and mother receive him with joy. They blot out the past, as it were ; they treat it as though it had never been ; they say nothing of their own tears and sorrow ; they just take the prodigal to their hearts. He is their son, their dearly beloved son. Now, that lad may still have to pay the penalty of his sin ; he cannot recall the wasted years ; he may have to reap in his body the bitter harvest of that corruption which comes of sowing to the flesh. And yet, if I know anything about human nature, I know

this, such a lad will well-nigh forget all his own pain and suffering in his joy at being received back to his old place in the home and in his parents' hearts. He has been forgiven—that is the blessed consciousness that fills heart and mind ; he has been *restored to love.*

And that is the essential thing in the Divine forgiveness—reconciliation, the restoration to love. That is the boon the human soul cries for. Do you remember the Psalmist's agonised cry : " Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me thy with free Spirit " ? That was what the Psalmist wanted ; that was the forgiveness he craved for ; not the remission of any penalty he might be suffering, but the restoration of the favour and smile of God. Now, I want you to notice that is the very thing which is promised in the Gospels—not remission of penalty, but restoration to love. Reconciliation ! as the Apostle Paul expresses it. And that *is* forgiveness—to know we are restored to the love and favour of God ; to feel the Father's kiss ; to hear the Father say : " This, *my son,* was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found." Can God forgive like that ? Why, of course He can. If an earthly father can do this, how much more our Father in heaven. Even assuming the reign of law to be rigid and unbroken, even allowing that every

broken law exacts its uttermost penalty, that does not affect His power to forgive. Forgiveness is not remission of penalty, it is a change of relationship; it is the substitution for alienation and estrangement of affection and love. Can God forgive like that? Yes, He can. He not only can, He does. You remember the story of that criminal who found his Lord in the condemned cell. And as they led him forth to execution he kept crying out with a shining face: "He is a great Forgiver, He is a great Forgiver." The penalty of his sin was not remitted, but he knew himself a forgiven man, and he had in his heart the peace of God which passeth understanding. And we need not go for our illustrations to ancient history. Men who have sinned and sinned deeply are still snatched as brands from the burning. There is scarcely a Christian worker who has not before to-day seen men who have lived lives of notorious shame enter into possession of the gift of mercy. The penalties of their folly and sin may still abide, but their voices sing and their faces shine for very gladness; they know themselves forgiven for Christ's sake; they have been restored to love; they live in the sunshine of God. Can God forgive? Yes, He can. "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness though we have rebelled against Him." "I will heal their backsliding," He says, "I will love them freely, for mine anger is

turned away." "I will blot out," is His gracious word, "as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." The moment a man turns to God and says, "Father, I have sinned," that moment he is received into the Father's embrace, and given a place in the Father's house, and restored to a Father's love.

THE REMISSION OF PENALTY

This is the essential thing in forgiveness—the restoration to love; and this is quite independent of any question of law. But is that the whole of forgiveness? Or does the Gospel conception of forgiveness embrace also the idea of the remission of penalty? I think no one can read his New Testament carefully without feeling that the Gospel idea of forgiveness embraces also the idea of the remission of penalty, the undoing of the evil effects of sin. The Bible does not subscribe to the remorseless doctrine that the consequences of sin abide unchangeable, irremediable for ever. It does not subscribe to the doctrine that a man is himself eternally the worse for every sin he commits. It does not subscribe to the doctrine that the effects of an evil word or action can never be nullified or destroyed. I know how questions of this kind vex and torture the minds of men who have repented and been received back into the favour and love of God. What about the penalties of sin? Are these men never to be delivered

from the bondage of evil desire, and from the torment of a tainted mind? And what about the evil they have done to others? Can that evil never be overtaken, never be arrested, never be undone? "Take my influence," said a dying man, who in his early days had lived a foolish and vicious life, "and bury it with me." Was that a futile prayer? Was his influence bound to go on working for sin and evil right to the very end of time? These are not easy questions to answer. The Bible itself insists upon it that sin brings its inevitable penalty, which even the penitent sinner shall not escape. And yet, if the Bible teaches one thing more clearly than another it is that, in time, the grace of God will bring to man release from the penalties of sin. The evil he did shall be destroyed, and he himself shall be set, without spot or blemish, perfect before God's throne. Let me suggest, very briefly, a consideration or two that may help us to understand such such a remission is possible.

1. In the first place, we must remind ourselves again of *the Living and Redeeming God.* This world is not under the sway of soulless, unmoral law; it is the sphere of operations of a living and redeeming God. Now to assert that sin is eternal and irremediable in its effect, is either to forget God entirely, or to say that evil is stronger than God. But just because I believe in the living and personal God, I believe in

the remediability of the evils wrought by sin. For God is ever present in the world, working against sin and repairing its ravages. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. When we say that the effects of sin on the individual are eternal, we forget that the living God Himself comes to the forgiven man, and God in a man becomes a fountain of healing, cleansing and restoring energy. And when I think of the restoring and healing powers of the grace of God, I can believe the old Bible word that we shall be clean every whit, that we shall be lifted up from the dunghill, set among princes, and made to inherit a throne of glory. That is a significant sentence in the Apocalypse, where the angel, describing the multitude before the throne, says, " These are they which come out of the great tribulation and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They had once borne upon them the stains and defilements of sin ; but every trace of these had disappeared. They stood before the throne in " spotless white." And how had they been made white ? They had washed their robes and made them white in " the blood of the Lamb." " Washed in blood " ! Now, the blood is the life ; and what the phrase means is that the redeeming and cleansing energies of the life of Christ in them had gradually set them absolutely free from every trace and defilement of sin. And we, too,

may be "made white in the blood of the Lamb." Christ in us is the hope of glory. God is at work in our world, counteracting evil and ever seeking to destroy it. Here is an old word full of comfort for those who are tortured by the thought of evil influences, to which they gave the initial impulse: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the residue of wrath shalt thou restrain."

2. And in the second place we do well to remember that, on the plane of our everyday life, love often interferes to prevent the infliction of the full penalty. Others will take upon themselves the burden, that the actual sinner may go free. For instance, there is not one of us here who could not quote illustrations of parents impoverishing themselves to hide the sin of their children and to deliver them from its doom. As Dr. Robertson Nicoll says: "No man, or at least very few men, ever suffers all that he deserves to suffer. Frequently those whom he has most wronged refuse to inflict upon him the pain he has deserved. They keep the secret of his sin; they forgive him frankly; they cheer him on the path of amendment; they use their influence with others more powerful, and in this way there is mitigation and modification of sin's penalty." We can each of us furnish illustrations of all this. Now the question I want to ask is this: If men by their skill and love can avert part of the penalty of sin,

is there anything irrational in the idea that God should be able to save us from the penalties of our own wrong-doing by bearing those penalties Himself? Cannot the Divine love do, at any rate, what human love can do? Here we come to the very heart of the Gospel doctrine of forgiveness. If we can be forgiven at all, if we can be released from the pains and penalties which our sin has justly entailed upon us, it is because love, in the person of Jesus, suffered in our stead, and took those penalties upon itself. That is the New Testament statement of the case. It declares that Christ Jesus who knew no sin, became sin for us. It says that He suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. It says in a stern and austere word that He became a curse for us. He exhausted in Himself and on Himself all the doom and woe of sin. And because of what He did upon the Cross, we are "free from the law of sin and death." There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; His death is unto the "remission of sins." It was that death that made forgiveness possible. It is that death that makes it possible for God to pardon men freely while yet "doing right" by the ethical order. For we must remember that, though forgiveness is free, it is not *cheap*. It is not bestowed upon us with a smile and a wave of the hand; it comes to us by the agony and bloody sweat, by the Cross and Passion of

the Son of God. That is the cost of forgiveness to God :

> "He died that we might be forgiven,
> He died to make us good,
> That we might go at last to heaven,
> Saved by His precious blood."

I think of that uttermost and mighty love revealed in the Cross, delivering us even now from the doom and death of sin, and I can believe it will also be able to repair even the ravages of sin. Even here we can see the beginnings of such restoring and repairing work ; even here we see love obliterating the traces of sin, so that faces that once bore the brand of the beast begin to shine with the very light of heaven ; even here we see love creating the clean heart and the right spirit. But we know not yet what we shall be. It is in the world to come that the wonderful achievement of God's forgiving grace will be fully realised. " We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

You ask me how can these things be ? I answer, I believe in the Redeeming God. The mightiest energy in our world is the energy of His restoring and saving love. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. He is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think. I can therefore say, with humble and grateful faith, " I believe in the forgiveness of sins." And I can preach a

forgiving God; a God who not only restores to love, but who can and will repair the ravages and ruin sin has caused. He has exalted Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour, on purpose to give us repentance and remission of sins; and when we in simple trust accept God's love in Christ, that blessed boon of forgiveness becomes ours. And when that love has done its perfect work, and we stand complete before the throne, we shall join the thanksgiving of the saints, and say: "Unto Him that loveth us and loosed us from our sins by his blood; . . . to Him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

XI

THE LIFE EVERLASTING

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you."—JOHN XIV. 2.

"I believe . . . in the life everlasting."
APOSTLE'S CREED.

I mentioned in the first of this series of discussions that, according to Kant, the great German philosopher, there are three postulates of the practical reason, three great beliefs that must be assumed in order to give meaning and moral energy to life. They are these: the belief in God, the belief in freedom, the belief in immortality. It is the latter of these postulates that we are to discuss together now. I have recalled to your memories Kant's dictum that we may start our discussion with a clear understanding of the importance of the theme we are about to discuss. This article about the "life everlasting" comes last in the creed, but though last it is by no means least. Kant ranks it among the two or three primary and absolutely indispensable beliefs. And in this he is simply following in the footsteps of

the New Testament writers. Centuries before, Paul anticipated Kant. Immortality was to him also a postulate of the practical reason. It was the only thing that made the moral life rational. "If the dead are not raised," he asked, "why do we stand in jeopardy every hour? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." The Christian life, the moral life, was only made reasonable and possible to the Apostle by belief in a life to come.

This great truth of immortality retains still its primacy of place. The lapse of time has in no way lessened its importance. It is much more than an interesting topic for debate; it is one of those elemental and necessary beliefs apart from which the great life cannot be lived at all. Mr. Myers, in his essay on George Eliot, tells how, one day, he walked with her in the Fellows' Garden of Trinity College, Cambridge; and she, stirred somewhat beyond her wont, and taking as her text the three words which have been used so often as the inspiring trumpet-calls of men—the words *God*, *immortality*, *duty*,—pronounced, with terrible earnestness, how inconceivable was the first, how unbelievable was the second, and yet how peremptory and absolute was the third. "I listened and night fell," says Mr. Myers, "it was as though she withdrew from my grasp one by one the two scrolls of promise, and left me the third

scroll only, awful with inevitable fate." God and immortality had both passed out of the region of the believable, according to George Eliot, and only duty remained. But in surrendering the beliefs in God and immortality, she robbed duty of its sanctions. In taking away the scrolls of promise, she took away all meaning and power from the third scroll. Duty ceased to be peremptory and absolute, and became irrational ; it lost its compelling force. Possibly she herself, as Mr. R. H. Hutton suggests, would not have deviated as she did from the moral law, had belief in God and the life to come remained with her, to lend their august and mighty sanctions to the calls and demands of duty. So let us be quite clear as to the vital importance of the theme we are discussing. This question of immortality is not some question of speculative interest merely, and lying remote and far from our everyday life. I say with Kant, that belief in immortality is one of the postulates of the practical reason. It is an essential faith ; it is the faith that lends rationality to the moral, that is, the truly human life, and it cannot be omitted or rejected without imperilling and undermining morality itself.

Yet we have to face the fact that this is one of the postulates that is fading out of the beliefs of men. Less and less do men think about the life to come, more and more

do they allow themselves to become absorbed in the life that now is. "In the vale of time," Tennyson once said, "the hills of time often shut out the mountains of eternity." That is the case with multitudes in our own midst; they have lost sight of the mountains of eternity, their vision is bounded by the hills of time; and all this is fraught with peril and disaster to the interests of the higher life, for a man empties duty of its meaning when he banishes immortality from his belief.

For this decay of the sense of eternity there are at least two reasons. It arises, in the first place, from a *false emphasis*. Men's minds are apt to be engrossed and absorbed by the things that are near and present and actual. It is not without constant effort that men can give a first place in their thoughts to the things that are unseen and eternal. Passion has more followers amongst men than Patience has. With him, we are apt to believe that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Material wealth and worldly pleasure seem to offer such advantages and gratifications to men, that they concentrate their thought and desire upon them to the complete forgetting of the treasure in heaven. It is not that they actively disbelieve in the life to come, it is simply that they never think of it. They would shrink from denying that there is such a thing as a life everlasting, but practically it has no existence for

them. They make their portion in this life. This world is their all. And for this unhappy state of things, the Christian Church is not altogether free from responsibility. It used to be a common charge made against the Christian faith that it was "other-worldly"; that it allowed itself to be absorbed in the contemplation of the joys of heaven, while neglecting the present and immediate woes and sufferings and sorrows of a groaning earth. Years ago there may have been some slight justification for that charge. There is no justification for it to-day. The charge that could most justly be brought against the Christian Church to-day is that it is not "other-worldly" enough. In our anxiety to escape from this charge of other-worldliness we have swung to the other extreme. We have banished heaven from our thought and our speech. We have poured cheap scorn upon it. We have made this world our whole and sole concern. Our energies are concentrated upon social betterment and philanthropic service. We say that it is not our business to prepare men for a future heaven, but to make a heaven down here. There is a truth in all this, no doubt. But the modern insistence upon this life as our chief and practically sole concern is a false emphasis nevertheless. And it has had baleful and lamentable results. It has encouraged and fostered that

materialistic spirit, which is the curse of our own day, and it has impoverished and enfeebled our Christian service. For to be stedfast in our efforts to improve and amend this present world, we need to feel the powers of the world to come. And to understand how best to deal with the problems that confront us here, we need, as Professor Peabody says, to look at them from above. To save our age from the blight of materialism, to inspire and strengthen us for our Christian service, we need to recover faith in the life everlasting. The best work done on earth and for earth, is work which is inspired by the vision of the eternal heaven.

But, in all this, there is involved no theoretic disbelief. It is a practical neglect deeply to be deplored, but it involves no objections or doubts which need to be met and removed.

THE OBJECTION OF SCIENTIFIC MATERIALISM

There is, however, another and very different reason for this decay of the sense of eternity, namely, the spread of *scientific materialism.* Scientific materialism does not simply ignore the life everlasting ; it challenges the possibility of it. In the words of George Eliot, it declares personal immortality to be unbelievable. The contention of materialistic scientists is that thought is but a function of the brain, and that therefore the total destruction of the brain in death means

the annihilation of conscious life. Now the strength of the materialistic contention lies here, that all the facts seem to be on its side. Death does seem to end all. When the breath leaves the body, the soul that dwelt within it passes out of our ken, and, as far as we are concerned, ceases to be. But though the obvious facts seem, at first sight, to support the materialistic contention, further and fuller consideration leads us to challenge the assumptions that underlie it. To examine these assumptions in detail would lead me into philosophical technicalities, wholly out of place in a sermon. But, perhaps, without indulging over much in the language of the class room, I may mention one or two considerations which seem to disprove the materialistic contention.

1. The materialistic argument proceeds on the assumption that the relation between the brain and thought or consciousness is a *causal* relation. That is to say, according to the materialistic argument, thought is the effect of which the brain is the cause. Now if that were so, there would be no escape from the conclusion that when the brain perishes consciousness perishes too. But is it so? That there is the closest and most intimate connection between the brain and consciousness is indisputable; that the brain is the organ of thought is undeniable; but no one has any right to assume that the relation between them is a

causal relation. That is to assume the very thing that needs to be proved. As a matter of fact Professor Tyndall declared that "the passage from the physics of the brain to the corresponding facts of consciousness is unthinkable. The chasm between the two classes of phenomena remains intellectually impassable." But when scientists tell us that the relation between these brain changes, that do undoubtedly accompany thought, and thought itself is a causal one, they are attributing a definite relation to these two sets of facts, when Professor Tyndall says that relation is "unthinkable." Science simply does not know what that relation is, and therefore has no right to say that, apart from the active and living brain, consciousness cannot exist.

2. And while, on the one hand, science has no right to say that the brain is the cause of consciousness, there are certain facts that seem to indicate that self-consciousness is independent of the material and physical brain. Take, for instance, the facts of memory and of personal identity. The physical particles of our brain are constantly changing, and it would seem that, if consciousness were a brain-product, this continual change of brain particles must issue in a perpetually changing consciousness. But through all the changes in the material structure of the brain, I am conscious that I am I—the same that I was long years ago as

a child. This sense of identity throughout the passing years seems to argue for consciousness and thought a certain independence of the mere material particles that make up the brain. I need, perhaps, say no more on this line. All I want to do is to show you that science has no right, in the name of science, to deny the possibility of immortality. Mr. Benson says, in his "Upton Letters," that the scientific evidence for the continuance of personal identity is nil. Probably the members of the Society for Psychical Research might quarrel with that statement, but let us grant that it has no evidence to give in favour of immortality. Neither has it, we must add, any evidence to give against. Science makes the world of phenomena its sphere, and upon a question like this it has nothing relevant to say. This is how Mr. F. W. H. Myers summed up the matter. "The affirmative answer she holds as unproved, and the negative as unprovable." The negative as unprovable! Science does not and cannot deny the life to come. In spite of Haeckel and the *Clarion*, there is no *a priori* scientific objection to belief in a future life. If other considerations make such a faith rational and necessary, science puts no stop in our way. Now are there considerations of another kind which impel us to the belief? Yes, there are. Let me indicate briefly three of them.

THE ARGUMENT FROM HUMAN NATURE

First, let me call attention to the argument for immortality derived from a consideration of *the nature and constitution of man himself*. This is the philosophical argument for immortality. It is as old as Plato and Aristotle. It was, indeed, the only argument they had, and yet to what heights of faith it lifted Plato everyone who has read his Phaedo knows right well. The argument starts with the indisputable fact that man is a moral being. That is what differentiates man from the brute creation; he is a moral being, living under the moral law and feeling the compelling attraction of the moral ideal. Now when you have said that, you have really, as Professor Seth says, constituted man heir of immortality. For that moral law, which is the law of man's being, does not belong to this world of time and sense. Ethical relations, by their very nature, belong to an eternal order. You can account for the animal without going beyond the realm of the finite. Eating and drinking, propagating its species, self-defence—these things constitute its life. "But the distinctive thing about man is a life not arising from these things and not satisfied with them." The moral law under which he lives, the "thou shalt" of duty, is not of earth but of heaven; it draws its sanctions from the unseen. So that, to quote Professor Seth, "in every moral act man transcends the limits of the present life and

becomes already a citizen of the eternal world. He has not to wait for his immortality; it is the very atmosphere of his life as a moral being." And this fact, that man is constrained to live as an immortal being, is in itself proof of his immortality. Otherwise you reduce human life to a mockery, a bitter and savage mockery; and you enthrone Heine's Aristophanes at the heart of things by saying that man is constrained to live as an immortal, when in reality he is only mortal; that he is constrained to live as if he had for ever to live in, when in reality he has only the brief years of his mortal existence. Against such a conclusion our intellectual and moral natures rise in absolute revolt. It is to de-rationalise the universe. Immortality is an implication of morality.

Let me illustrate the same truth from a rather different point of view. Every man, when he awakes to conscious reflection, hears what Kant called the "categorical imperative" of duty, the "thou shalt" of the moral law. But every "thou shalt" implies a corresponding "thou canst." The thing that we ought to do, we can do and must do. But the "thou shalt" of the moral law is an infinite "thou shalt." It cannot be accomplished within the limits of finite time; it has never been accomplished by the best of men. Even a Paul has to cry: "Not that I have already attained or am already made perfect, but I press forward."

Unless then, this infinite demand of the moral law is to be set down as another illusion and mockery, man demands infinite time for its realisation. And it is just because deep down in their hearts men are sure they have this "infinite time," that they address themselves to tasks they know they can never, in their earthly life, accomplish, and set before themselves ideals they can never hope to realise in time. God has set eternity in their hearts, and men refuse to accept what can be done in the few years of their mortal life as the limit of their possibilities. You remember how this is the burden of Browning's "A Grammarian's Funeral." He there depicts a scholar in love with knowledge, toiling at an infinite task, though already "dead from the waist down," with that fine lesiure which comes from knowing he has eternity to work in.

"Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:
Live now or never!"
He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes
Man has Forever."
Was it not great? did not he throw on God
(He loves the burthen)—
God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen?"

Man is immortal till his task is done, we say; and we say rightly, but his moral task is never done, therefore his life must be a life everlasting. Let no one dismiss all this as poetry. It is not

mathematical proof, it is true; it is stronger than mathematical proof; it is an argument based upon the rationality of life. These great ambitions and ideals and loves of ours were born of eternity and are prophetic of eternity. They have not been given to us that death may mock and baffle us. God will not leave us in the dust. The grave cannot be the end. We shall rise "to other heights in other lives, God willing." "I believe in the immortality of the soul," says John Fiske, "as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work."

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE CHARACTER OF GOD

In the second place, let me call your attention to the argument for immortality to be derived from *the character of God.* In a sense, it is analogous to the argument already considered, only we approach the matter now, not from man's standpoint, but from God's. What is religion? Well, essentially, as Mr. Carnegie Simpson says, "it is God calling men to fellowship with Himself." It is the communion of the human with the Divine, it is man and God becoming friends. That is the marvel and miracle of the Gospel, that God calls and invites men to become His friends. Between God and man there may grow up a friendship, deep, sacred, holy, intimate. "Enoch walked with God." Abraham was called "the Friend of God." David was a man "after God's own

heart." Now this friendship is salvation and life to man; but I believe it is also unspeakably dear and precious to the very heart of God. He delights to have us for His friends, and when we give ourselves in love to Him, He graves our names on the palms of His hands, and will never forget us or let us go. Now, the question we have to face is this. Can death put an end to this holy intimacy? Can the grave rob God of His friends? Is the coffin to be the end of this blessed and holy fellowship? Have we been called upon to walk with God, and to love God, and to live with God that it may all finish there? It is absolutely unthinkable. It is God's character that is at stake. It is impossible that God should call men into His friendship, and then cast them as rubbish to the void. God is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent. It is impossible that the grave should ever be able to rob God of His friends. That were to make death stronger than God. The fact that God calls us to be His friends is a pledge of immortality. "That fellowship in the present," as Professor Seth says, "is our best pledge of its continuance in the future. The fellowship with the Eternal cannot be but eternal, and such fellowship is of the very essence of the moral life." Abraham was a friend of God. God never let His friend go. Listen: "I *am* the God of Abraham." The relation was not a past but a present one.

The friendship had not been interrupted. "I *am* the God of Abraham," and God, as our Lord taught us, is not the God of the dead but of the living. "Father," said Jesus, as he hung a-dying, "into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Life was ebbing fast away, the shades of death were compassing Him round, but there was no fear in His soul. He had lived with God, as a son with a father, all the days of His life; He knew death could not sunder or interrupt that holy intimacy; He would be with His Father on the other side of death just exactly as He had been on this side. "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." This is a sure and true instinct of the soul. Our faith in immortality bases itself on our faith in the character of God. If it be possible for men to enter into fellowship with God—and there are thousands and tens of thousands at hand to testify that it is—then it is impossible that death should ever destroy that friendship. God does not call us to be His friends to baffle and mock us at the last; death can never bring to nought the purpose of His love. It was Charles Kingsley who wrote on his wife's tombstone the words "*Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus.*" "We have loved, we love, we *shall love.*" And when I think of my own experience of the love and grace of God; when I remember that in my own soul I have felt that love and feel it now; when I know that I can say "the Son of

God loved me and gave Himself for me," I am at ease about that future that lies on the further side of the grave. I know little about it, but I know this, the friendship will endure. "We have loved, we love, *we shall love.*" I think of God loving me, and I know my immortality is sure, and I can say with the Apostle: "I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

THE ARGUMENT FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

And, lastly, let me call your attention in a sentence or two to the argument for immortality to be derived from *the experience of Jesus.* What that experience was I have already discussed in the sermon on the Resurrection. Jesus died and rose again. And in the Resurrection of Jesus we have the final and satisfying proof of the life beyond the grave. For I would have you remember that, according to St. Paul's teaching in that great fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, our Lord's experience was not a solitary and unique experience. It was a representative experience. Christ was in a very deep and real sense the normal man, and what happened to Him is typical of what is to happen to us all. He is the first fruits of them

that slept; He is the first-born among many brethren. The Resurrection of Christ has made us quite certain of a life beyond the grave. Shakespeare talks somewhere about death and the grave as

> "That undiscovered country, from the bourne
> Of which no traveller returns . . . ."

But, at any rate, one traveller has returned. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Yes, the Man in the dyed garments has come back, and He is mighty to save those who, through fear of death, have all their lifetime been subject to bondage. He has taken captivity captive; He has abolished death; He has brought life and immortality to light. "Let not your heart be troubled," He says to us, "in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you." Our hopes and instincts have not played us false. The intimations and prophecies of immortality we possess in our souls have not tricked or deceived us. Jesus has travelled beyond the sunset, and He has come back again to tell us that beyond the grave and gate of death

> "There is a land of pure delight,
> Where saints immortal reign,
> Infinite day excludes the night,
> And pleasures banish pain."

I look at the empty grave, and then into the face of my risen Lord ; and then in the tones of perfect certitude I say, "I believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting."

"I believe in the life everlasting." Once again, what a great and subduing faith this is ! How solemn it is, on one aspect of it ! We believe in the continuance and permanence of life. It is just this, as Mr. Carnegie Simpson points out, that constitutes the solemnity of dying. For we do not really die at all ; we pass into another sphere of life in which we see things as they really are, and discover there is no joy save in the love and favour of God. But what of those who, during their earthly years, have taken no pleasure in God ? The thought of the "everlasting life" is no joy to them. It is a fountain of fear. The sting of death is sin.

"I believe in the life everlasting." To those who because they walk with God, can think of it not with fear but with confidence, what a glad and inspiring faith it is ! What comfort there is in it in face of the losses life brings ! There come times to all of us, when perhaps as we stand beside some open grave, the world seems strangely desolate and cold. But we believe in "the life everlasting," and so we cheer ourselves with the thought of the Father's house and the future reunion.

"And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which we have loved long since, and lost awhile."

And what a strength it becomes when we face the end for ourselves. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" For we believe in the "life everlasting." We know the grave is not our resting place. We go to be for ever with the Lord. Our death-day is our crowning-day.

"We bow our heads at going out, we think,
And enter straight another golden chamber of the King's
Larger than this we leave, and lovelier."

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